

UNDER THE CHILIAN FLAG

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UNDER THE CHILIAN FLAG

A Tale of War between Chili and Peru

BY

HARRY COLLINGWOOD

Author of "With Airship and Submarine" "Across the Spanish Main"
"The Pirate Island" &c.

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JIM STAGGERED TO THE HELM

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Frontispiece

CHAPTER I

What Happened on the *Pericles*

"You, Thompson, go down and send the second mate up to me. Tell him to leave whatever he is doing and to come up here at once. I want to speak to him," growled Captain Fisher of the steamer *Pericles*, turning, with a menacing expression, to the grizzled old quartermaster who stood beside him on the bridge.

Thompson, as though only too glad of an excuse to leave the neighbourhood of his skipper, grunted out an assent, and, swinging round on his heel, shambled away down the ladder leading from the bridge to the spar-deck, and departed on his errand.

The *Pericles* was an iron single-screw steamer of two thousand tons or thereabout. She was employed in the carriage of nitrates, silver ore, hides, etc., between Chilian ports and Liverpool. She was owned by a company, which also possessed two similar vessels employed in the same trade. Captain Fisher, her skipper, had a considerable number of shares in this company, a circumstance which accounted in no small measure for the fact of his being the skipper of the *Pericles*; for a man less fit to have the control of other men it would have been exceedingly difficult to find.

Fisher was a man of enormous stature and splendid

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physique, but his features, which would otherwise have been considered handsome, were marred by a ferocious expression, due to his chronic condition of ill-humour. He was constantly "hazing" his men, and was never at a loss for an excuse for irritating them in every possible way. In this pleasing occupation he was ably seconded by his first mate, an American, named Silas Hoover. Between the pair of them they had contrived, during the course of the several voyages which they had performed together, to render their men thoroughly dissatisfied almost to the verge of mutiny; and there is little doubt that long before this the crew would have given open and forcible expression to their feelings had it not been for the efforts of the second mate, a young fellow of eighteen years of age, named James Douglas. This was the individual for whom Fisher had just sent. He had conceived a most virulent hatred for him, in consequence, probably, of the fact that Douglas was the only officer in the ship for whom the men would work willingly and for whom they showed any real respect. The lad had been left an orphan at an early age, and as he showed even from the first a predilection for a seafaring life, he had been sent by his uncle at the age of fourteen as an apprentice on board a sailing ship, and during the four following years he had gradually worked his way upward until now he was second mate of the *Pericles*.

Up to the time when he joined that ship he had had no cause to regret his choice of a profession; but the six or seven months which he had spent under Fisher had proved so thoroughly unpleasant that he had made up his mind he would leave the ship at the first port at which she called. This resolve was echoed by his own particular chum, Terence O'Meara, third engineer of the same ship, who had likewise found life on board the *Pericles* anything but to

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his liking. The steamer was, at the time when this story opens, on her way to Valparaiso, the principal seaport of Chili; and, as she was now in the very centre of the South Atlantic, Douglas hoped to escape from his tormentor in about a month's time. As a matter of fact, Douglas and his friend were just talking the matter over when the grizzled old quartermaster popped his head into Douglas's cabin with the remark, "Skipper wants to see you, sir, on the bridge. He told me particularly to say that he wanted you to come *immediately*; and he do seem to be in a rare bad mood this morning, so I shouldn't keep him waiting, sir, if I were you."

"All right, Thompson, all right," answered Douglas. "I'll be there in a moment." Then, turning to Terry O'Meara, he remarked: "I wonder what fault he will have to find this morning. I'll wager that he only wants to see me in order to blow me up about something, confound him! Well, Terry, old boy, I'll see you again when you come off duty in the evening. Trot along to my cabin at about ten o'clock, as usual. Good-bye for the time being."

With a wave of his hand, Douglas slipped out of the cabin and hurried along the alleyway, anxious to avoid keeping Fisher waiting any longer than was absolutely necessary. In a few seconds he reached the foot of the bridge ladder, and, running quickly up it, found the captain impatiently pacing up and down, evidently in the very worst of bad tempers.

"You wish to see me, sir," said Douglas respectfully.

The skipper glared at him for a moment and then burst out with, "Yes, you lazy young scoundrel, I do; and a precious long time you've been coming, too. I suppose you thought that, being off duty, you could skulk in your cabin and do nothing. I expect you were hatching some mischief with

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that other bright spark, your friend O'Meara. But let me tell you, sir, I will have no idlers on board my ship. Just remember that; and don't let me see you talking quite so much to that young scamp O'Meara. But that's not what I wanted to see you about. Why have you not carried out my instructions as to that paint-work which I told you to see about? I gave you my orders three days ago, and there is no sign as yet of the work being commenced. What do you mean by such conduct, sir? What possible excuse can you have for not——"

"Pardon me, sir," interrupted Douglas. "I fear you are making a mistake, or that you have been misinformed. I *did* put the paint-work in hand directly you told me; and the work was nearly completed when we ran into that heavy sea yesterday. You know that we shipped it solid over our bows, and the paint being still wet was, of course, nearly all washed off. I set the men to work, however, to clean things up again, and they have restarted the job this morning. You can see them at work now."

"Yes, of course I can," roared Fisher; "and I wanted to know why you had not seen fit to start the job until just now. However, you have given me an excuse, and I suppose I must accept it; but if you had carried out my orders with a little more promptitude the paint would have been dry before we ran into that breeze. You can go now, sir, and take care that I do not have cause to reprimand you again. I am getting sick of your laziness, incapacity, and insubordination."

Douglas turned on his heel and left the skipper without any more ado, but his cheeks burned with indignation at the injustice of it all. He had carried out his orders to the letter directly they had been given him, and it was certainly not his fault that the work had to be done over again. Neither

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was he lazy nor insubordinate ; while, far from being incapable, he had earned the good-will of every skipper with whom he had sailed, with the solitary exception of this one. He returned to his cabin and lay down to think things over, with the result that he went on duty a few hours later more than ever resolved to make this his last voyage under Captain Fisher. True, he would be compelled to desert and would consequently lose his certificate, and probably have some difficulty in getting another ship ; but even that would be better than the life he was living at present, which, he felt, was not fit for a dog.

The days slipped slowly away, however, in spite of all the discomfort and annoyance ; and Douglas at length began to look upon his quarrels with the skipper as unavoidable, and to treat them as a matter of course. The *Pericles* rounded Cape Horn, steamed up the Chilian coast, and on January 7, 1879, dropped her anchor in Valparaíso harbour. The long and dreary voyage was at an end at last ! Douglas and Terry O'Meara had long before this completed all their plans for an early escape ; and the two lads were now standing just by the break of the poop, looking across the blue water towards the fair city, aptly named the "Valley of Paradise."

This was not the first time that the boys had been there, and both knew the place fairly well ; but this morning they seemed to notice some indefinable change in the appearance of the city, and tried to discover in what it consisted.

Presently Douglas started up with the remark : "I know what it is, Terry, old boy ; there's some tremendous excitement or other ashore there. If you will take a squint through this glass you will see that the shops are all shut, and that a good many of the streets are barricaded. Up there at the back of the town there is a body of Chilian

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soldiers busily throwing up earthworks or constructing a fort of some kind. Take my word for it, lad, there's a revolution in progress there, or something akin to it. What luck, Terry! We shall be able to get right into the thick of it; and I shall be much mistaken if we don't find plenty of employment ready for us when we get ashore. But what on earth's all this? This looks as though something more serious than a mere revolution were in progress!"

Douglas's exclamation of astonishment had been drawn from him by the sight of a squadron of warships which had just put in their appearance round the point, and which were slowly steaming in column of line ahead, and were evidently making their way toward the warship anchorage in the roads. There were five of them altogether, two large and three small ships, all flying the Chilian ensign. By means of the glass the lads made out that the first two craft were the *Almirante Cochrane* and the *Blanco Encalada*, both battleships. Then came the corvettes *O'Higgins* and *Chacabuco*; and, lastly, the sloop *Esmeralda*. Presently they all slowed up and anchored; and as they did so there came the sound of tumultuous cheering from the city, to which the ships replied by dipping their ensigns.

"As you say, Jim, this is no revolution," answered Terry. "War has probably broken out between Chili and some other country—I wonder which. Peru, I expect. And it seems to me, my lad, that we have just arrived in the very nick of time. Here is the chance of our lives, and we shall be foolish if we don't make the most of it."

"What do you mean?" replied Jim; "I don't quite follow——"

"Why, simply this," answered Terry. "We want to get away from this steamer, don't we? And in the usual course of events we might have some difficulty in finding

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another; but here is our opportunity ready made for us. Chili is apparently at war with some other country; and the thing for us to do is to get ashore and enlist in the Chilian navy. They are sure to want all the men they can lay hands on. We have had plenty of experience; and you may be certain that no awkward questions will be asked. They will accept us, and be more than glad to get us; thus, you see, we shall have employment immediately, instead of having to wait, perhaps, several months for it. We are indeed in luck's way! The only question is, How are we to get ashore? for I don't suppose the 'old man' will grant any leave, under the circumstances. We will try him first, however, and if he refuses we shall have to think of some other means of getting away from the ship. Let us go to your cabin and talk the matter over; this is a business which we had better decide as soon as possible."

He slipped his arm through Douglas's and the pair went off to the latter's cabin, where they spent the whole afternoon in making plans, with the result that, by the evening, they had perfected all their arrangements. They applied to the captain for leave in the usual way, but, as they had anticipated, it was refused, so they had to look about for some means of getting away from the ship without being observed, and they managed it very simply, thus.

The next morning a boat laden with fruit came out to the *Pericles*, in the hope that her crew would purchase some, as the ship had been ordered by the authorities to remain at her moorings until further notice, in consequence of the wharfage being required for military purposes. Jim and Terry thereupon got into conversation with the man in charge of the boat, and made arrangements with him to come off that same night in a small skiff and take them ashore.

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It required both time and money to induce the fellow to fall in with the scheme, but he at last consented ; and he proved as good as his word, for at nine o'clock that evening he quietly dropped alongside, gave the pre-arranged signal, and a few minutes later both the young men, with all their belongings, were being pulled ashore to seek their fortune in a new land and under another flag. They little knew, when they stepped ashore at the Custom House quay, what adventures were in store for them, what trials they would be called upon to undergo, what perils they would pass through ; but even if they could have foreseen them all it is very doubtful whether they would have hesitated. They paid the man, and, chartering a conveyance, drove away to the nearest hotel, where they put up for the remainder of the night, fully determined that the following morning should see their project put into execution, and that the evening should find them duly enrolled as officers in the Chilian navy.

CHAPTER II

Jim Enters the Chilian Navy

ALTHOUGH the two lads went to bed early, intending to get a good night's rest so that they might be up and doing betimes the next morning, they soon found that sleep was well-nigh out of the question, by reason of the uproar that never ceased the whole night through. The mercurial Chilians were wrought up to a pitch of the highest excitement and enthusiasm, and bands of them persisted in marching through the streets, shouting *vivas* at the top of their voices and singing war-songs. It appeared that the inhabitants of Valparaiso had been dreading an attack on that city by the Peruvian fleet, although war had not as yet been actually declared; and the activity which Terry and Jim had observed on the heights behind the city was due to the fact that the soldiers and citizens had been busily engaged in throwing up earthworks and other defences in order to repel the expected attack. But the timely arrival of part of the Chilian fleet, under Admiral Rebolledo Williams, had put an end to their anxiety, and they were now testifying to the relief they felt in the manner usually adopted by Southern nations.

After lying in bed for some two or three hours, endeavouring unsuccessfully to get to sleep, the two lads rose and looked

out of their window at the scenes that were being enacted in the streets below them, and when they had been thus employed for a quarter of an hour they no longer felt any desire for sleep. Huge bonfires had been lighted wherever there was room to place them, and processions of men and women marched to and fro, carrying torches, and singing their national songs with astonishing verve and enthusiasm. Groups of people collected round the bonfires, and danced until the early hours of the morning, when they gradually broke up and dispersed to their homes. It was broad daylight before the last of the revellers had disappeared; and the two lads, recognising the futility of now attempting to secure any repose, dressed themselves and went out on a tour through the city which should occupy them until the time arrived for the public offices to open, when they would be able to set about their business.

The two lads had not proceeded very far on their way when they perceived, some distance ahead of them, a small crowd of people clustering round a building, and they crossed the road to see what the disturbance was about. They soon perceived that the building was a gunsmith's shop, and that the excitement was due to the fact that the people outside were bent on securing arms and ammunition for themselves, as a protection against the marauders who were wont to infest the town upon the slightest excuse, and who were now, under cover of the excitement caused by the impending war, committing all sorts of atrocities, which the authorities were very much too busy with other matters to put a stop to.

"Look here, Douglas," exclaimed Terry, clutching his companion's sleeve, "it seems to me that we ought to follow the example of these people. Everybody in this place appears to go about armed, and we had better do the

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same, in case we should happen to get into some sort of trouble. It shows what a state the city must be in, when the only place open the whole night through happens to be a gun-shop ! How much money did you bring out with you, Jim ? Enough to purchase a couple of revolvers and some ammunition ? ”

Douglas hurriedly searched his pockets, and the two lads found that their joint possessions amounted to about fifty pesos (they had exchanged their English money at the hotel for Chilian currency). Acting upon Terry's advice, Jim now stepped into the shop and purchased two revolvers and a packet of ammunition for them, paying about forty pesos of their money for the weapons. Once outside the shop, the two lads slipped round a corner, loaded the pistols, and slipped them into their hip pockets. Having done this, they started out once more on their tour of exploration, feeling much more secure than they had previously done.

It was by this time about seven o'clock in the morning ; and as the Government Offices would not be open until nine or ten o'clock they had still fully two hours to fill up before they could present themselves for enlistment in the Chilian service. Therefore, feeling somewhat hungry, they strolled up and down the streets, on the look-out for some café or eating-house where they might refresh the inner man ; and, after about a quarter of an hour's search, they found a place in a side street which promised to afford what they required. As they were about to enter, Douglas seized his friend's arm and remarked—

“ I say, Terry, I don't know how it strikes you, but this looks to me to be a very curious sort of place, and the surroundings do not appear precisely what you might call select. Don't you think we had better go on a little farther

and see whether we cannot find a more respectable-looking place?"

Terry cast his eyes over the café, and up and down the street in which it was situated. Unlike the rest of the town, everything in this district seemed to be comparatively quiet, and there were very few people about, so he shook off his companion's restraining hand and exclaimed—

"Oh, I don't know, Jim; I think this place looks right enough, and it is quiet, and that is more than you can say for the other parts of the town. I think we shall be quite safe in risking it; let us go inside and see what the proprietor can give us to eat, for, to tell you the truth, I am most ravenously hungry."

"All right," replied Douglas; "if you don't mind, I am sure I don't; we ought to be able to take care of ourselves, with the little toys which we have in our pockets. Come on, then; let's go inside."

The two lads thereupon walked in through the door, and immediately found themselves in a large room which was filled with little marble-topped tables, each made to accommodate four persons, while a high counter, on which were coffee-urns, trays of cakes, flasks of spirits, etc., ran down the whole length of the apartment. Early as was the hour, the place was very far from being empty; indeed, the lads found, upon looking round, that nearly every table was occupied, with the exception of one nearly in the middle of the room, and a second standing in a somewhat dark corner, close to a door which apparently communicated with the back premises.

"The place seems pretty full, doesn't it, Terry?" queried Jim, taking a comprehensive look round. "I should scarcely have expected that there would have been so many folk about at such an early hour. These people must have

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been up all night. Shall we take that table over in the corner, there? It is out of the way, and I don't feel very much inclined to take the one in the middle of the room, to be stared at by everybody in the place. What do you propose to have for breakfast? There doesn't seem to be a very wide selection, but perhaps they may be able to supply us with something eatable."

"Well," answered O'Meara, "for myself, I should like some fried eggs, if we could get them. I see they have coffee on tap in these big urns yonder. What say you?"

Douglas agreed that he too could relish a few eggs; and the two lads stepped up to the counter and inquired in their best Spanish, which they had picked up during the course of frequent visits to South American ports, whether they could be supplied with the required comestibles.

To their astonishment, the proprietor did not at once reply, but, after staring hard at them for a few seconds, slipped quickly off into the back part of the shop, where they heard him speaking volubly in Spanish to some unseen person or persons. The lads could not, at that distance, understand all that he said, but Jim fancied that he caught the words *espías* and *atacar*. He naturally did not connect them in any way with his friend or himself, however; and when the proprietor returned in a minute or two, Jim renewed his request. This time the fellow was all smiles and bows, and he assured the *señores* that their order would be most promptly attended to. The boys therefore seated themselves at the table which they had selected, and waited for the food to be brought to them, examining meanwhile the motley collection of people in the building. There seemed to be men present of every shade of colour under the sun, from the pink-skinned representative of some northern country,

down to the blackest negro ; and their costumes were as varied as they were picturesque. But what gave the lads a momentary qualm of uneasiness was the fact that every person in the place had suddenly become very quiet, whereas, when the boys entered, the café fairly hummed with conversation ; and they also noticed that nearly every pair of eyes was directed toward themselves, while the expressions on the men's faces were, to put it very mildly, decidedly hostile.

Presently Douglas remarked to his chum : "I say, Terry, old boy, it appears almost as though these fellows did not quite approve of our presence here ; I wonder what's wrong ? The Chileans have always been very friendly disposed toward us British, so I suppose it is this anticipated war which has upset their equilibrium a bit. All the same, I wish the landlord would bring along our meal, so that we might finish it and get out ; I don't like the look of things here at all."

"Neither do I," replied Terry ; "but if there should be a row, remember that we must not get separated, whatever we do ; and don't use your pistol until you are absolutely compelled to do so. Should you, however, be obliged to shoot, you must shoot to kill ; for when once we open fire we shall have all our work cut out to get away alive. Ah, here comes our breakfast at last ; so let us get on with it as quickly as possible, and take no notice of the menacing looks of this crowd. If they see that we don't appear to notice anything wrong they may quiet down a bit."

"Right you are," replied Douglas ; and he began his meal with a very excellent appetite despite the uncongenial surroundings. The two boys carried out their programme of not appearing to notice the forbidding glances which everywhere met them whenever they raised their eyes from

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their plates ; but presently their ears caught the sound of angry whispers, then low mutterings, until in a few minutes furious voices plainly directed against themselves were heard from every corner of the room. One man jumped upon a chair and began to harangue the crowd, speaking in some South American patois which the boys did not understand, and pointing toward them with angry gestures, while several other rough-looking characters had risen to their feet and were gradually edging down toward the corner where Jim and Terry were seated.

“Jim,” exclaimed Terry, suddenly glancing up, “there is no doubt that these unwashed scoundrels very strongly object to our presence here, for some reason or other ; I don’t much like the idea of running away, but since we are outnumbered by about ten to one I really think that discretion will prove the better part of valour in the present case. Let us pay our score at once, and get out—if we can,” he added under his breath.

The lads rose to their feet and walked, as unconcernedly as they could, toward the counter, upon which Terry rapped with a coin, to attract the landlord’s attention. But that gentleman had, for some reason or other, vanished, and, rap as they might, no one put in an appearance ; while all the time the crowd continued steadily to close in on them, with angry looks and threatening gestures.

“Come away, Terry,” whispered Douglas ; “we must not stand on ceremony any longer. We shall have to make a bolt for it, or we shall not get out at all ; put your pistol in a side-pocket, so that you can get at it easily, and then come along.”

Under cover of one of the tables the lads shifted their revolvers from one pocket to the other, and then began to walk toward the door ; but no sooner had they started than,

with a hoarse growl of rage, a score of men, drawing daggers and knives from various portions of their clothing, dashed at the boys, upsetting chairs and tables as they came, and evidently bent upon taking their lives, if possible.

As a matter of fact it was only the obstructive presence of the numerous tables and chairs that saved the two lads from that first wild rush. With all the agility of youth they sprang back to the corner where they had taken their meal, put their backs against the wall for safety's sake, and drawing their pistols, presented them at the crowd of furious men, Terry inquiring, at the same time, in the best Spanish he could muster, the meaning of this murderous assault.

Seeing the muzzles of the deadly revolvers pointed at them, their assailants paused for a few seconds, while one of the men—a gigantic Chilean with a blanket poncho over his shoulders—took it upon himself to answer the lad's inquiry.

"Why are we going to kill you, you dogs?" he roared. "Why?—because you are a brace of Peruvian spies. *Car-amba!* we know very well why you have come here; but neither of you shall leave this place alive. We have a quick way with people of your stamp in this country."

"But," exclaimed Douglas, at the top of his voice, "you are all making a mistake; we are no Peruvian spies, but a couple of British sailors, who have left our ship, the *Pericles*, in order to enlist in the Chilean navy, and fight against the Peruvians, not for them. We are merely waiting for the offices to open, in order to proceed there and give in our names as candidates for service."

The only reply to this statement was a volley of oaths and mocking laughter, interspersed with the words "liar," "traitors," and "Kill the Inca dogs"; while, recovering from their momentary alarm at the sight of the pistols,

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the crowd again began to surge forward toward the two lads. The situation was becoming exceedingly critical ; therefore, again raising his revolver, Douglas pointed it straight at the foremost man and shouted, "One step farther and I fire !"

The fellow hesitated for the fraction of a second, then his hand shot forward swiftly as a flash of lightning, and the knife which it had held, missing Jim's ear by a hair's-breadth, stuck quivering in the panelling behind him.

With a growl of rage Douglas pulled the trigger of his pistol, firing twice in quick succession, while, close beside him, Terry's revolver also spoke out, and so close were their foremost assailants that every bullet took effect, four men plunging heavily forward to the ground, almost within arm's length of the two boys. This circumstance, so far from intimidating the Chilians, seemed but to stimulate their rage, and knives began to flash through the air like so many silver flying-fish, thrown, too, with such force that had one of them but hit its mark it would have closed the recipient's earthly career on the spot.

"By the Lord Harry !" ejaculated Terry, firing rapidly into the thick of the crowd, "this is getting rather too warm to be pleasant ; we shall have fired away all the cartridges in our pistols presently, and they will certainly give us no time to reload. What is to be our next move, Jim ?"

Douglas, however, had already been glancing hastily about him, in the endeavour to discover some pathway of escape, and, even as Terry spoke, his eyes lighted upon the door close to which they had been sitting while they were taking their breakfast.

"Edge along toward the right a little, Terry," he exclaimed ; "our only hope of escape is through that door. God grant that it may not be locked !"

Meanwhile O'Meara, availing himself of a momentary pause on the part of their assailants, had contrived to insert a few fresh cartridges in his pistol, and, firing several more shots right into the "brown," began to edge his way along to the door, in which manœuvre he was quickly followed by Douglas. Then, shooting out his left hand behind him, he felt for the knob, and turned it, knowing that their lives depended upon whether it was fastened or otherwise.

To his inexpressible relief, the handle turned, and the door opened under his touch, while, luckily for the two lads, it opened away from instead of toward them.

Emptying the remaining barrels of their revolvers, the boys at once slipped through, and pushed the door close behind them, just as a further volley of knives came hurtling through the air, to stick quivering in the panelling, while, with a hoarse roar of rage, the Chilians surged forward, bent on preventing the escape of the supposed spies. But by the greatest good luck there happened to be a lock and a couple of bolts on the farther side of the door, and these the two lads slipped home in a trice, interposing between themselves and their bloodthirsty foes a barrier which they hoped would gain them a few minutes' grace.

Once on the right side of the door, they hurriedly reloaded their pistols, and looked round for an exit from the apartment, while the air resounded with the sound of the blows which thundered upon the frail woodwork behind them. Clearly the door would not stand more than a minute or so, and it was necessary to hasten if they were to escape after all. But, look as they might, there seemed to be no means of egress, until Terry suddenly shouted, "That door will be down in a second, Jim. We must get behind this tier of casks; they will afford us a certain amount of shelter, at any rate."

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In a moment the boys had slipped behind the stack of barrels, and there, right in front of them, was the door for which they had been searching.

“Come along, Terry,” exclaimed Douglas; “this way for your life!” And like a flash they darted through the door, finding themselves in a dimly lighted passage, which looked as though it led into the back premises of the café. Just as they entered the passage they heard a crashing and splintering of wood, followed by shouts of rage, and they knew that the frail barrier between themselves and their pursuers was destroyed.

Down the passage they ran at top speed, round a sharp corner at the bottom, and then emerged into a large *patio* or courtyard. A rapid glance round revealed no exit from the place; and already they could hear their enemies rushing down the passage behind them.

“Quick! Quick!” whispered Jim, “we must hide somewhere or we are lost.” And he cast his eyes round for some place which would suit their purpose.

“This way!” he cried to his companion, dashing across the court towards a large corn-bin. “This is our only chance!”

Like a flash the two lads raised the lid, clambered inside, and let the covering down just as the first Chilian emerged into the *patio*. They heard their pursuers separate and search the whole yard, calling to one another at intervals to inquire whether anything had been heard or seen of the fugitives; but, for some reason or other, it seemed to occur to none of them to glance inside the corn-bin; the reason probably being that it stood before them so prominently that they never dreamed that any one could have thought of hiding there.

Suddenly there was a shout from the far corner of the

patio, and a voice cried, "This way, children! I have found the door through which the spies have fled!"

There was a quick trampling of feet, more savage cries, and then silence. The Chilians had evidently gone off on a false scent; and now, if ever, was the moment for Jim and Terry to effect their escape. Listening intently for a few seconds, Douglas raised the lid of their hiding-place an inch or so and peered out through the opening thus formed. There was no one in sight, but they could hear the savage shouts of the Chilians in the distance as they searched hither and thither for their prey.

"Now, Terry," whispered Jim, "*now* is our time. Out you get quickly, my hearty; we must make a rush for the passage, through it into the shop, and so out into the street; it is our only hope. Are you quite ready? Yes? Then here goes!" And flinging back the cover, the two friends clambered out, rushed across the *patio*, up the passage, through the wrecked door, and into the shop. To their great relief, the place was absolutely empty. After a short halt, therefore, to rearrange and brush their clothing, which had become somewhat disordered, they strolled casually out of the café into the street.

By this time there were many more people about, and mingling with the throng the two boys soon lost sight of the café, and with rapid steps made the best of their way down toward the harbour, near which were situated the Government Offices. These were now open, and entering one which bore a plate with the words "*Oficina por empleo en la marina*" inscribed thereon, they found themselves in the presence of Señor Don Guzman Cartador, the Director of the Navy, to whom they made known their desire to enter the Chilian service. This gentleman listened courteously to them, examined them shortly upon their capabilities, and

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finally gave them a letter of introduction to Admiral Rebolledo Williams, of the battleship *Blanco Encalada*, to whom he recommended them to apply, saying at the same time that he had little doubt they would be successful in obtaining commissions, as Admiral Williams was very short of efficient officers just then.

Armed with this official's introduction the two lads presented themselves aboard the warship about mid-day, and were fortunate enough to find Admiral Williams not only disengaged, but also in a particularly good humour. He at once granted them an interview; asked them several questions, as the Naval Director had done; and finally accepted their services, much to the gratification of the two lads. He gave Douglas a commission as second lieutenant on board the flagship, and O'Meara a post as second engineer aboard the same vessel. He then sent them ashore to have their commissions signed by Captain Morales, and to procure the necessary uniforms and outfit, and instructed them to report themselves on board the *Blanco Encalada* on the 7th of February, since he, the Admiral, expected orders to sail on or about that date.

The boys left Señor Williams with many expressions of gratitude, and went ashore to provide themselves with uniform and the necessary kit, an order for the supply of which had been given them by Williams himself. The tailor promised to have everything ready by the 6th, and for a wonder he was as good as his word. On the morning of the 7th, therefore, the two lads in full uniform, and with their belongings in the boat with them, were rowed off to the *Blanco Encalada*, and by mid-day they found themselves duly installed as officers in the Chilian service.

CHAPTER III

The Occupation of Antofagasta

THE month of February in the latitude of Valparaiso corresponds approximately to the month of August in the northern hemisphere, and it was a beautiful, sunny, and very hot morning when, on the 7th of that month, the Chilean fleet, consisting of the *Blanco Encalada* flagship, the *Almirante Cochrane* battleship, the corvettes *O'Higgins* and *Chacabuco*, with the sloop *Esmeralda*, steamed out of harbour, on its way to Antofagasta, the principal seaport of Bolivia.

It may not be amiss to state here briefly the causes of the war that was then impending between the allied republics of Bolivia and Peru and the republic of Chili.

The desert of Atacama, on the borders of Chili and Bolivia, had been for many years without an acknowledged owner. Chili claimed it, so also did Bolivia; but it was not considered by either claimant to be of much importance, and it was certainly not regarded as worth fighting for, until it was discovered that it was rich in nitrates and other mineral wealth. In 1866 the two republics, being allied in war against Spain, fixed by treaty the 24th parallel of south latitude as the future boundary between them; and Bolivia agreed that Chilean citizens who were already landowners in the region between 23° and 24° south should

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be allowed to mine and to export the produce without tax or other hindrance. To facilitate this arrangement, Chili was permitted to maintain a representative in the Custom House at Antofagasta. The nitrate business of those days was chiefly in the hands of a Company, the heads of which were the British house of Gibbs, a Chilian named Edwards, and the Chilian Government. On February 23, 1878, Bolivia saw fit to impose a tax of 10 *centavos* ($4\frac{1}{2}$ d.) per *quintal* (152 lbs.) on all nitrates. Chili remonstrated; but Bolivia insisted, and declared, in addition, that the tax was meant to be retrospective, and that unless all dues were paid before February 14, 1879, the nitrates in the hands of the exporters would be seized and sold by auction. As the day which had been fixed for the seizure drew near, a Chilian squadron, under Rear-Admiral Rebolledo Williams, was got ready for the purpose of seizing Antofagasta itself. It was this fleet which, on the morning of February 7, 1879, steamed out from Valparaiso, with Jim and Terry, as Chilian officers, on board the *Blanco Encalada*, the flagship of the squadron.

As the fleet weighed anchor and stood out to sea the bells pealed from every steeple in the town, while the guns in the hastily improvised fortifications above the town thundered out a farewell salute to the ships which were going to vindicate the honour of Chili, and the action of which was tantamount to a declaration of war. As each warship rounded the point she returned the salute with all her starboard broadside guns, while the ensigns at the mizzen-gaff were dipped thrice in jubilant farewell.

Although war had not as yet actually been declared against Peru, the Chilian Government had very strong reason to suspect the existence of a secret treaty between that country and Bolivia; and as Peru was the possessor

of a navy of considerable strength it behoved Admiral Williams to be exceedingly careful that he did not run into any ambush of Peruvian ships ; a very sharp look-out was therefore kept incessantly during the six days which the fleet took to steam from Valparaiso to Antofagasta. There was no Bolivian navy, if we except a few steam-launches and old spar-torpedo boats ; there was nothing, therefore, to fear in that direction ; but, as the Chileans had not as yet had time to advance their forces overland up the coast, a contingent of five hundred regulars was put on board the ships to effect the occupation of Antofagasta ; two hundred and fifty being put on board at Valparaiso, while Admiral Williams had been instructed to call in at Caldera Bay, in order to embark the remainder.

Steaming at the rate of the slowest ship in his squadron—the sloop *Esmeralda*, which was incapable of a speed of more than four or five knots—the Admiral arrived in Caldera Bay on the evening of the 9th of February ; and as it was too late to think of embarking the troops that night, he anchored his ships, in column of line ahead, at a distance of about half a mile from the shore, and on a course which stretched across the bay from the signal station to the little village of Calderillo.

Nothing had thus far been seen of the Peruvian squadron, and as Bolivia had, as stated above, no navy worthy of the name, and the fleet was, moreover, still in Chilean waters, Admiral Williams did not consider it necessary to establish a patrol of picket-boats on watch round the ships, as he certainly would have done had he been lying before a hostile port. It was this oversight, coupled with the fact that Williams regarded the Bolivian sea strength as beneath his notice, that very nearly led to a frightful disaster for the Chileans at the very outset of the war.

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On this particular night Douglas was, as it happened, the officer of the watch, and Terry, who was off duty, was sharing the vigil with his friend, walking to and fro upon the *Blanco Encalada's* quarter-deck and listening to the sounds which were wafted across the water both from the town of Caldera and from the neighbouring ships, all of which were brilliantly lighted up. There was a sailor's "sing-song" in progress aboard the corvette *Chacabuco*, the second ship away from the *Blanco Encalada*, and both lads listened with amusement to the rollicking sounds which proceeded from that direction. There was no moon, but the sky was spangled with brilliant stars, which shed a faint, silvery lustre over the sea and the distant summits of the Andes, enwrapping everything in a soft luminous haze which could scarcely be dignified with the name of light.

The two lads paced to and fro, eagerly longing for the time when Douglas should be relieved from duty, for both were very tired; but Terry did not feel inclined to leave his friend to continue his watch by himself. As the time passed on, the lights of the squadron disappeared, one by one, until at length the only lights which showed were the riding lights, two of which were suspended on every ship, one at the bow and one at the stern. The sounds on board the ships had died away completely, and it was only occasionally that the shouts of a party of revellers were heard from the shore.

It was shortly after one o'clock in the morning when Terry, who was still keeping his friend company, walked to the ship's rail and stood there in a listening attitude; then he raised his voice slightly and called Douglas to his side.

"Listen carefully for a moment, old fellow," he said; "cannot you hear something away out there on our port-bow?"

Jim listened, and presently his strained senses caught a faint sound like the throbbing of a tiny engine somewhere away in the darkness.

"Yes," he whispered, "I certainly can hear something. To me it sounds as though there is a small steam launch somewhere out there; but I certainly cannot see anything of her. What can a launch possibly be doing out there, at this time of the morning?"

"Well," replied his chum, "if this were not a Chilean port I should be inclined to suspect something in the nature of a night-attack; but under the circumstances I don't quite see from what quarter such an attack could come. The Peruvian fleet can hardly have come upon us unawares, for we should surely have seen some sign of them; they would hardly steam without showing any lights at all. Besides, this sound—which is certainly nearing us, by the way—seems to me more like—Hullo! did you see *that*, Douglas? By Jove, it strikes me that there is something more in this than meets the eye."

"Yes," answered Jim, "I distinctly caught sight of a flicker of flame. It appeared to me as though somebody had struck a match for some purpose or other, and had hurriedly extinguished it. I wonder what is happening, away over there. There is certainly something going on that is not quite as it should be, I am convinced."

During this brief interchange of remarks the noise of the churning little propeller had been drawing nearer; and, after listening intently for a few seconds longer, Douglas whispered hurriedly to his chum, "Slip below *quickly*, Terry, and bring me up my night-glass; I believe there is something radically wrong about this business."

In a moment O'Meara was back on deck, bearing the telescope, which Douglas hastily snatched from him and

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brought to bear on the spot from whence the sound proceeded. He had been glancing through it for only about half a minute when he turned excitedly to Terry and gasped out, "Rouse the ship, man — and quickly, too ; there is a launch approaching, and she carries a spar-torpedo ; she is making straight for us, *and evidently means to torpedo the flagship !*"

Like a flash Terry disappeared to rouse the crew, while Douglas continued to watch the approach of the launch, in a perfect agony of apprehension. The little craft was very close indeed now, and, steaming at the rate of some nine knots, she would be alongside the *Blanco Encalada* in a couple of minutes ; and once alongside the battleship, nothing could save the latter from destruction.

But anxiety lent wings to Terry's feet, and in a few seconds the men made their appearance on deck, in all stages of undress, for they fully appreciated the dangers of the situation and had not waited to clothe themselves. Their officers also had dashed up from below, and hurried words of command flew from one quarter of the ship to another. Admiral Williams himself rushed up from below, upon the alarm being given, and he now instructed the ship's bugler to sound the alarm, and to sound it with all his strength, while at the same time a blank charge was fired as a warning to the other ships to be on the alert. Immediately afterward a bugle was heard shrilling from the *Almirante Cochrane*, and this was taken up by every ship in the squadron, for the whole fleet was now thoroughly alarmed and on the alert.

For a few moments a state nearly approaching to panic reigned aboard the flagship ; but the men were quickly at their quarters, and every gun in the ship was promptly trained upon the position indicated by Douglas. It was

too dark to enable the gunners to aim with precision, but the sound guided them to some extent, and suddenly a perfect volcano of machine-gun fire broke out on board the *Blanco Encalada*, followed by a hoarse scream of agony from the torpedo-launch. An iron bucket was partly filled with paraffin and this was lighted as a flare, throwing a lurid glare over the sea and disclosing plainly to view a couple of rapidly approaching launches, each of which carried a spar over her bows, from which a torpedo was suspended, the launches heading directly for the *Blanco Encalada*. But upon the nearest launch the effect of the flagship's fire was terrible. The helmsman had been cut nearly to pieces by the hail of bullets, and he now hung dead over the tiller of the little steamer, which was consequently yawing wildly about. The remainder of her crew were in the well abaft the boiler, some lying huddled up on the floor, while others hung loosely, like half-empty sacks, over the launch's bulwarks, their arms trailing in the water. Indeed it appeared as though the *Blanco Encalada*, by a lucky fluke, had concentrated her whole fire upon that one devoted craft. For a moment it appeared as though the little steamer, with her crew of dead, would still effect her purpose, for the torpedo was still intact at the end of its spar, and the launch was heading straight for the battleship; but just at the last moment the corpse of the helmsman was jerked from the tiller by the motion of the sea, and the launch's head immediately fell off a point or two. She rushed past the *Blanco Encalada's* bows, missing them by no more than a few feet, and a few minutes later a deafening report from the shore told those on board the flagship that the torpedo-launch had rushed at full speed upon the rocks, thus exploding her torpedo and blowing herself to pieces.

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The second launch, which had been steaming about a hundred yards astern of her consort, had miraculously escaped that whirlwind of shot, and now, seeing the fate of her consort, she described a wide circle, and headed away to the north-west, out of the bay, at full speed. In a few minutes she would be beyond the circle of light thrown by the flagship's brazier of fire, and would be in safety; but she was not to escape so easily. The *Blanco Encalada's* gunners carefully laid their machine-guns on the craft, and opened a furious fire upon her. The rattle of the Nordenfeldts sounded like a continuous roar of thunder, and the stream of fire from their muzzles itself illuminated the darkness of the night with a fitful glare.

The gunners got the range almost immediately, and those on board the flagship could see that the water was lashed into foam round the launch by the pelting rain of missiles. There was no escape from that iron hail, not even for those desperate members of the crew who dived overboard, for the men of the *Blanco* made a target of every face that appeared upon the surface of the water.

Then the end came, suddenly and dreadfully. A bullet must have passed in advance of the launch and struck the torpedo itself, for the onlookers saw a dazzling burst of whitish-blue flame, which was followed by a deafening, stunning explosion, and the launch seemed to disappear, as if by magic, in a tornado of flame, for not even a fragment of her appeared on the water afterwards. The roar of the machine-guns at once ceased, and every man on board the ship wiped away the cold sweat of fear which had burst out on his forehead at the prospect of being torpedoed; for there is no arm in the naval service so dreaded by the sailor.

Tranquillity was now gradually restored, and half an hour

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later peace once more reigned ; but not a single man in the whole squadron could bring himself to go below again until day dawned. On every ship huge fires were lighted, and boats were sent to patrol the fleet in order to prevent a repetition of the occurrence ; but it was not until daylight revealed a sea empty of craft save those of the Chilians that the fearful strain of suspense was relaxed.

Admiral Williams personally thanked Douglas and O'Meara for their quick action, which had undoubtedly saved the flagship, and very probably some of the other vessels of the squadron. He also questioned the lads closely, in order to ascertain whether they had heard or seen anything which would furnish a clue to the nationality of the occupants of the launches, but they could tell him nothing ; and the Admiral was at length driven to the conclusion that his assailants must have come down the coast from Antofagasta, and must have consisted of a couple of the ancient torpedo-launches which the Bolivians were known to possess, but which Williams had left out of his calculations as being too unimportant to be taken into consideration. How dearly this oversight might have cost him has already been seen.

The following, or rather, the same morning, the ships' boats were lowered, and, assisted by flat-bottomed craft from the shore, began the work of embarking the remainder of the troops. It continued during the whole morning, and by mid-day the balance of the military contingent was distributed among the ships, which then got up their anchors and turned their bows to the northward once more, still under easy steam for the benefit of the old and rotten *Esmeralda*, two of whose boilers were so eaten away by rust as to be useless. A particularly keen look-out for hostile ships was kept, in view of the alarming incident in Caldera

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Bay, but nothing of a suspicious character was sighted, and on the evening of the 13th of February the fleet anchored before the town of Antofagasta, the principal seaport of Bolivia, lying in a half-circle at a distance of about a mile and a half from the shore.

The obnoxious tax was to come into force on the following day, if Bolivia adhered to her original resolution; and Admiral Williams had orders that, should such prove to be the case, he was to seize the Custom House, invest the town, and in the event of resistance being offered, to bombard it. Chili did not intend to submit tamely to the high-handed action of Bolivia, which constituted a serious and intolerable infraction of treaty.

Immediately the squadron came to an anchor, therefore, every gun was trained upon the town, in readiness for action, should such become necessary; and early on the following morning Admiral Williams had his gig piped away, and, accompanied by his flag-captain, he was pulled ashore to ascertain the intentions of the Bolivian authorities, and to warn all the Chilian inhabitants of the place that it would be bombarded should the President of the Republic not prove amenable to reason, so that they might leave the town, with their belongings, before his ships opened fire.

The Admiral was ashore until about three o'clock in the afternoon; and when he returned to the *Blanco Encalada* it soon became known that the Bolivians had refused to relinquish their demands, and that therefore Antofagasta was to be invested. He believed, however, that it would not be necessary to bombard the town, as he thought it was hardly likely that the inhabitants would be so unwise as to offer armed resistance to the landing of the Chilian troops. The soldiers were therefore to be landed at once under cover of the guns of the squadron, while a naval force,

composed of men from the *Blanco Encalada* and the *Almirante Cochrane*, were at the same time instructed to land at the northern part of the seaport and seize the Custom House.

The Chilian troops, under Colonel Sotomayor, were therefore put into boats belonging to the warships, which were then taken in tow by the small steam craft and conveyed to the wharves at the south end of the town, their landing being unopposed, except for a few stray shots which were fired from the cover of some closed shops, and which a few volleys from the soldiers promptly checked. Then the ships' boats being once more available, the task of seizing the Custom House was proceeded with ; and it was anticipated that here, if anywhere, a determined resistance would be made. A council of captains was called on board the *Blanco Encalada*, and a plan of campaign resolved upon. It was decided that Captain Latorre, of the *Almirante Cochrane*, should lead the naval detachment, which was to be drawn from all the ships of the squadron, in proportion to the complement of their crews ; and Douglas was the officer selected to take charge of the party from the *Blanco Encalada*, much to his delight, the selection being probably due to a desire on Admiral Williams's part to recompense the lad in some measure for the promptitude and coolness which he had displayed in saving the flagship in Caldera Bay.

Jim joyously took leave of his friend Terry—who, as he belonged to the engine-room staff, could not expect to be sent on shore expeditions—adjusted the sword at his side, ran down the side ladder, and took his seat in the stern-sheets of the steam launch which, with a whale-boat which it was to tow, carried the detachment of men from the *Blanco Encalada*. The boats of the other vessels

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were by this time ready; and, headed by the launch of the *Almirante Cochrane*, carrying Captain Latorre, the leader of the expedition, the little flotilla swept away from the ships toward the north end of the town, vociferously cheered as they went by the remainder of the squadron.

The distance to the Custom House was about two miles; and by the time that they had covered half of it, it was seen that a considerable amount of activity was being manifested ashore; in fact it looked as though here, at any rate, the Bolivians had fully determined to offer resistance.

Jim remarked on the circumstance to Lieutenant Alcérrez, who was sitting next to him; and while he was speaking, Captain Latorre hailed the boats to slow up and come alongside, in order to receive further instructions. These were soon given, and were to the effect that the launches of the flagship and of the *Almirante Cochrane* were to be the leading boats in a formation of double column of line ahead, in which order they were to attack. This matter having been arranged, all went ahead again at full speed, while the men eased the cutlasses in their sheaths and inspected the cartridges in their rifles, in readiness for the anticipated encounter.

Suddenly, when the boats were within a couple of hundred yards of the mole leading down from the Custom House, a blaze of fire leapt from the loopholed walls of the buildings, and bullets flew round the little flotilla in a perfect hailstorm. The Chilean ensign in the stern of Douglas's launch was literally ripped from its staff, proving that, had the Bolivians but depressed their rifle muzzles a trifle more, every man in the steamer's well would have been hit by the leaden shower. Lieutenant Alcérrez,

who was sitting next to Douglas, emitted a curious little cough, turned half round, and fell forward over the lad's knees, while several men in the launch sprang convulsively to their feet, only to drop down again in a limp, motionless heap, or to fall over the low gunwales in the violence of their death-struggles. Jim shuddered as he thought of the fate of poor Lieutenant Alcérrez, but he pulled himself together and laid the poor shot-pierced body gently down on the boat's floor grating, thereby saving his own life ; for even as he stooped, another shower of rifle-bullets hurtled into the launch, killing several more men, and piercing the boat herself in six places below the water-line, so that she began to take in water at an alarming rate.

Some of the other craft had, however, come off still worse than the *Blanco Encalada's* launch ; for the casualties were even heavier in the *Almirante Cochrane's* boats, while a shot had pierced the boiler of the launch belonging to the *O'Higgins*, which immediately blew up with disastrous results, killing and wounding nearly the whole of her crew.

The flotilla was by this time, however, within the shelter of the mole ; and a minute later the boats rushed alongside at full speed, Jim leaping ashore at the same time as Captain Latorre, who, sword in hand, formed his men quickly up, shouting, "Forward, my children ; you have your comrades to avenge !" And away raced the boat's crew along the pier toward the Custom House, receiving, as they did so, another terrible volley from the defenders. The Chilians' blood was up, however, and they did not even pause to succour their wounded, but dashed forward, holding their fire in reserve, and with their bayonets fixed.

Before the Bolivians could fire again, the Chilians had

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reached the building, and were thus protected from the fire of its occupants, as the loopholes were too small to allow of their rifles being depressed to any great extent.

“Bring that bag of powder here !” roared Latorre at the top of his voice as two men came up staggering under its weight. The petard was promptly laid against the door ; a train was led close alongside the wall to the corner of the house, round which the seamen also sheltered themselves ; a match was put to it ; there was a loud report and a stunning concussion, followed by the sound of rending timber ; and the landing party dashed forward again, round the angle of the building, and in through the breach formed by the explosion. As they entered the house there was a shout of execration and defiance from the floor above, and the defenders began to swarm down the stairs to repulse their enemies.

But, hampered as they were by lack of room to move freely, they could do nothing. They had foolishly left no force on the ground-floor, but had all gone to the first storey, in order to be the better able to fire on their foes ; and this oversight now cost them very dear. The Bolivians got jammed into an inextricable mass, in their efforts to descend the stairs at the same time ; and, while thus helpless, they were mercilessly cut down and bayoneted by the infuriated Chilians.

In a few minutes the bloody work was over ; the corpses on the stairs were pulled away, and the assailants rushed upstairs to complete their work. But the Bolivians had now no stomach for further fight, and they threw down their arms, crying for mercy. Captain Latorre therefore had them all disarmed and bound securely, after which he went up on to the roof of the building and hauled down

the Bolivian flag, hoisting the Chilean ensign in its place. He then signalled to Admiral Williams: "Custom House taken, with loss of nineteen killed and twenty-three wounded."

Antofagasta was in the hands of the Chileans !

CHAPTER IV

The Chilians Bombard Iquique

SHORTLY after the occupation of Antofagasta, a Chilean force under Colonel Sotomayor—who was in command of the troops landed from the squadron—advanced to Caracoles, to protect the mines there; and on March 23, 1879, defeated at Calama a body of Bolivians under Dr. Ladislas Cabrera, who was compelled to retire, with a loss of twenty killed and wounded, and thirty prisoners. The losses of the Chilians numbered only twelve.

Peru thereupon made certain precautionary preparations, and sent envoys to both Chili and Bolivia; although, as a matter of fact, she had already mobilised her navy, and was quite prepared to take the offensive at any moment. Indeed it was perfectly well known in Chilean official circles that the Peruvian fleet was actually at this time at sea, seeking, if possible, to deal her opponent a crippling blow even before war had been formally declared.

Chili thereupon demanded the reasons for her preparations, as indeed she was fully entitled to do, and required that they should cease. Then, receiving no satisfactory reply, she announced her knowledge of a secret treaty, dated the 6th of February 1873, between Bolivia and Peru, and at once declared war against the latter as well as the former.

Immediately following this, Chili increased her navy by repurchasing the corvette *Abtao*—a sister ship to the famous *Alabama* of American Civil War times—built in 1864; of 1050 tons displacement, 300 horse-power, and with a nominal sea-speed of 6 knots. This ship was armed with three 150-pounder muzzle-loading guns and three 30-pounder muzzle-loaders; and she played almost as important a part in the war between Chili and Peru as did the *Alabama* in the American Civil War.

Chili also bought from the Pacific Steam Navigation Company the screw steamer *Amazonas*, for use as a transport; and by chartering the *Rimac*, *Itata*, *Lamar*, *Loa*, and *Limari* from the Chilian Steam Navigation Company, and the *Mathias Cousiño* and other steamers from the Cousiño estate, she strengthened the effectiveness of her fleet to a very great extent. All the upper spars of these craft were sent ashore, and their lower yards, where they were retained to serve as derricks, were cock-billed. The head-booms were unrigged, and all but the standing bowsprits of the wooden vessels were landed.

The senior Peruvian naval officer afloat was at this time Captain Don Miguel Grau, a native of Piura, and a man of about forty-five years of age. He is spoken of as “an officer of the highest capacity and bravery, remarkably quiet and unassuming, and an excellent seaman. His people worshipped him, and all who knew him honoured him.” In 1868 he had been given command of the *Huascar*, an ironclad monitor of 1130 tons displacement, 1200 horse-power, and with a nominal sea-speed of 11 knots. She was armed with two 10-inch 12½-ton muzzle-loading guns (both in the same turret), two 40-pounder muzzle-loaders, one 12-pounder muzzle-loader, and one Gatling gun. This ship distinguished herself more than any other of the Peruvian

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fleet ; and in her subsequent bloody battle with the Chilian warships, *Blanco Encalada* and *Almirante Cochrane*, in which her gallant commander lost his life, she behaved herself with such gallantry that her name will go down to history as one of the epoch-making ships of the world.

From 1873 to 1879 Admiral Grau was a member of the Peruvian Congress for Paíta, but on the outbreak of the war he successfully applied to be reinstated in his former command of the *Huascar*. By him the Peruvian squadron was arranged as follows : The first division, under Admiral Grau himself, consisted of the *Huascar* ; *Independencia*, armoured frigate ; and the *Oroya*, a paddle transport of 1597 tons. The second division was placed under the orders of Captain Carillo, and consisted of the monitors *Manco Capac* and *Atahualpa*, bought from the United States, each of 2100 tons ; and the *Chalaco*, a transport of 1000 tons displacement. The third division, under Captain García y García, comprised the *Union*, a wooden corvette of 1150 tons, and a very famous ship ; the *Pilcomayo*, gunboat ; and the *Limeña*, a paddle transport.

Such was the Peruvian navy at the commencement of the war ; and the whole fleet, in three divisions, as above, was under the command of Admiral Grau.

The port of Antofagasta having been occupied by Chilian troops, the squadron under Admiral Williams left the place and commenced a patrol of the coast, with a view to enforcing a blockade. On the 5th of April the fleet appeared off Iquique, in Peru, and the admiral announced that a blockade of that port would begin on the 15th of April following, thus allowing ten days for the Chilian inhabitants of the place to leave and carry with them all their belongings.

Up to this time no naval action had been fought at sea ; and it was, even yet, a moot point whether Peru

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would not "climb down," and back out of her alliance with Bolivia. But, all unknown to the Chileans, the Peruvian warships *Union* and *Pilcomayo* were cruising up and down the coast for the purpose of snapping up any small Chilean craft that they might happen to sight, and to do as much damage to the Chileans as they possibly could.

Now, it happened that, shortly after the Chilean squadron had invested Antofagasta, the small corvette *Magellanes* arrived at Valparaiso, having returned from police duty in Tierra del Fuego. She was thereupon immediately ordered by the Chilean authorities to proceed northward and join Admiral Williams's fleet. But on her way, while off the mouth of the river Loa, she fell in with the Peruvian ships *Union* and *Pilcomayo*, with which she fought a running action for over two hours, when, owing to her superior speed, she effected her escape. The carnage on both sides was terrible, and the *Union*, although much the larger ship, was so seriously damaged that she was obliged to return to Callao, the principal seaport of Peru, in order to be dry-docked and repaired. The *Magellanes* then fell in with the main Chilean squadron, off Iquique, and made her report of the occurrence.

It was at first intended that Iquique should merely be bombarded; but to render the attendant conditions as stringent as possible, Admiral Williams strictly forbade the condensation of fresh water on shore, a prohibition that would naturally cause very great inconvenience to the inhabitants, since fresh water, either from springs, wells, or streams, was almost unobtainable in the town. On several occasions, however, smoke was observed to be rising from the spot where the condensing apparatus was located, indicating an apparent disposition on the part of the inhabitants to disregard the prohibition; and this so

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incensed the Chilean admiral that he determined to send Douglas on shore with a message to the effect that if the offence were persisted in, he would be compelled to bombard.

The steam launch was accordingly lowered away from the *Blanco Encalada*, and manned; and presently Jim, in full uniform, took his seat in the stern-sheets of the craft, which immediately steamed away to carry the admiral's protest and message to the *Intendente* of Iquique.

In about half an hour the launch ran alongside the quay at Iquique, and Jim sprang ashore, declining the offer of the coxswain to accompany him and show him the way to the *intendente's* quarters.

Jim, whose knowledge of Spanish was by this time nearly perfect, made inquiries at the pier for the office of the *intendente*, and a man, in a uniform with which the lad was not acquainted, immediately offered to conduct him thither. Jim, suspecting no treachery, unhesitatingly accepted this individual's services, and the pair, entering into an animated conversation, left the pier and turned their steps townward.

For some distance their way led along a sandy road, paved here and there with cobblestones, and fronted by buildings which seemed to be hotels or inns of the cheaper kind, probably intended for the accommodation of seamen from foreign ships which used the port. They followed this road, which ran along the sea-front, for about a mile and a half; and Jim was just about to pass some comment on the distance when his guide turned to the right and plunged into a narrow and gloomy side-street, the appearance of which filled Douglas with aversion, although at that time no suspicion of treachery entered his mind. He soon noticed, however, that his guide, whose name, it transpired,

was Manuel Lopés, was taking him up one narrow street and down another in a most extraordinary fashion, and that they seemed to be getting into a particularly low quarter of the town.

Jim had just made up his mind to question Lopés as to whether he was quite sure of the way, when the latter stopped before a large white-painted building with green shutters, and led his companion in through a high and wide archway into a kind of courtyard, the like of which is nearly always to be found in large houses in both Old and New Spain.

"This looks as though it might be the residence of some official or other," mused Jim ; "but what an extraordinary quarter of the town the governor seems to have selected for his dwelling ! However, I suppose he knows his own business best, and——"

"Will you be pleased to follow me, señor ?" here broke in the guide Lopés, bowing in an obsequious manner, and leading the way across the *patio* to where a heavy door gave entrance into a part of the building which overlooked the courtyard.

Jim tucked his sword under his arm and followed the fellow into a room which seemed, to him coming out of the brilliant sunlight, to be shrouded in darkness.

"Have the goodness to take a chair, señor," smiled Lopés, pushing one of those articles forward for Jim, "while I go and ascertain whether His Excellency will see you."

Jim accepted the proffered chair but, somewhat nettled by a certain curious change in the man's voice, remarked : "But, señor, I have come ashore expressly to see the *intendente* ; and see him I must ; my orders are imperative !"

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“Oh, I assure you there will be no difficulty whatever on that score,” replied Lopés. “Kindly excuse me for a few minutes while I announce your arrival.”

Jim bowed; and his guide walked quickly out of the room, slamming the heavy door somewhat sharply behind him. Douglas heard him pause for a few seconds, and then step sharply across the stone-flagged *patio*, from the other side of which he fancied he heard the sound of a low laugh and some words spoken in an undertone. But he paid no particular attention to the matter and, in order to pass the time, rose from his seat and began to move round the room. The apartment was so extremely dark, however, that he presently walked over to the window, in order to pull aside the curtains which he supposed, were excluding the light.

Greatly to his surprise, however, he found that there were no curtains before the window, but that the gloom was caused by the fact that a kind of iron shutter was securely fastened across the outside. This was indeed a curious sort of waiting room, and——

A sudden thought flashed across Jim's mind, and he darted quickly to the door and turned the handle, pulling it toward him as he did so.

It was as he had surmised; the door had been locked or bolted on the outside; and he knew now why Lopés had paused those few seconds before crossing the *patio*. Jim was a prisoner, and he had walked into the trap with his eyes open. Oh! what a fool he had been! He might have known that a person of importance such as the *intendente* of Iquique would not have had his residence among the slums of the city. But what on earth, he wondered, had been their object in making a prisoner of him? How came it about that he had been expected, and that a man had

been posted at the pier, ready to receive him and lead him into this ambush?

Then he suddenly remembered the dispatches he carried from the Admiral; and he realised that a person on shore with a telescope could have seen him put off from the flagship, and have observed his progress the whole way from her to the quay. What, too, more natural than that the Peruvians should be anxious to get a Chilean officer into their hands, especially a flag-officer, who would be almost certain to have a very considerable knowledge of the Chilean admiral's plans? There were many ways by which that information could be extracted by unscrupulous and desperate men, and Jim shuddered as he realised the danger in which he stood. The first thing that he now did was to take the dispatches from his inner breast pocket, and secrete them, as well as he could under the circumstances, next his skin, resolving at the same time that he would give up his life rather than part with them, or disclose to the Peruvians any of the admiral's plans.

The only weapon which Jim had brought ashore was, of course, his dress sword; but he resolved that he would make some use of that before they should place him in any closer confinement, or lay hands on his papers.

The next thing to be done was to examine the room, to see whether any means of escape presented itself; and in the first place he scrutinised the window which was secured with the iron shutters outside. But a very few seconds sufficed to show him that there was no possibility of getting out by that way, and he looked round for a second door to the apartment. The walls were, however, lined with massive bookshelves, and there was no trace of any door save that by which he had entered. Strangely enough, there was not even so much as a fireplace to the

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room ; and after half an hour's careful search Douglas was reluctantly compelled to acknowledge that he was helpless to do anything further at present, and that he would have to await developments before taking any action.

He therefore made himself as comfortable as possible in an easy-chair, keeping his ears open at the same time, so that he might have due warning of the approach of an enemy. The house was so silent that, so far as any sound was concerned, it might have been uninhabited. Douglas had been waiting for half an hour, when he discovered that he was becoming exceedingly drowsy, and that the air of the room seemed not only to be unaccountably close but also to have a rather queer new odour in it. Jim yawned portentously several times, and at length moved over to the window to try whether the air would be any fresher there, for he put down its oppressiveness to the fact that there was no chimney in the room. But, so far as he could ascertain, the window seemed to be hermetically sealed ; and upon inspection he found that the glass in it was so abnormally thick that to break it would be practically an impossibility.

Douglas now began to find that his breathing was becoming distinctly difficult and, seized with a vague sense of new danger, he ran to the door and hammered vigorously upon it, shouting at the same time for some one to come and release him. But his blows and shouts only echoed emptily round the *patio*, and not a soul put in an appearance. He felt as though all the strength were going out of his limbs, and he presently staggered to a sofa, upon which he flung himself, powerless to stand upon his feet any longer. Strange visions began to float before him, and curious fancies flitted through his brain, which felt as though some one had bound an iron strap round it and was

gradually increasing the pressure until it seemed as though his head must split asunder.

How much longer would it be, he wondered dully, before the coxswain in charge of the *Blanco Encalada's* steam launch became anxious about his long absence, and instituted inquiries, or returned to the flagship with the news? Admiral Williams was certainly not the man to allow to pass unchallenged such a gross violation of International Law as the seizure and imprisonment of a properly accredited envoy; but then, the people who had been guilty of this outrage had doubtless acted unofficially, and the *intendente* would consequently deny all knowledge of the business. Surely, though——

But by this time Jim's thoughts had become more and more confused, and his brain was refusing to act coherently. Flashes of lurid light passed before his eyes, and the horrible feeling of suffocation became ever more and more acute. Finally, with what he fancied was a shout for assistance, but it was, in reality, only a weak whisper, Jim lost consciousness altogether, and rolled from his couch on to the floor, where he lay like a log, breathing stertorously.

Almost at the same moment a section of the book-case surrounding the room moved inward, apparently of its own volition, and two men, one of whom was the man Lopés, crept cautiously into the apartment. Hastily seizing Jim's inanimate body by the arms and legs, they dragged him out of the room, carried him down a long narrow passage and, opening the door of another room, took him inside and placed him on a bed which it contained.

"What a time the youngster took to go off, Manuel!" said the second fellow, addressing Lopés while he industriously searched Jim's pockets. "I hope we have not given

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him an overdose, and killed him ; for I expect the information that we shall extract from him will be worth a great deal more than that contained in the papers which he is sure to carry. By the way, I wonder where they can be ? They are certainly not in his pockets. You are certain you have not made a mistake, *amigo mio*, and got hold of the wrong man ? ”

“ *Carrajo !* no,” exclaimed Lopés testily. “ This is the fellow, without doubt ; I watched him all the way from the ship. Here, lend me your knife, and I will rip up his clothes ; he is certain to have suspected treachery after I locked him in, and will have secreted the documents somewhere. Ah ! here they are. Now, read them out to me, Carlos, while I try to bring the *hijo* round.”

There was silence for a few minutes, broken only by the rustle of paper ; then, with an oath, the man called Carlos dashed the packet down, saying, in a voice hoarse with excitement and rage : “ *Carramba*, Lopés you are a fool ! you have made a mistake somewhere. This is not the man at all ! I suspected as much when I saw that it was only a boy that you had captured. These papers are simply a notification from the admiral of the Chilians that the condensation of water is to cease ! While we have been wasting time here the other fellow will have come ashore and returned again, with the papers still in his possession ! Oh ! Lopés, you are a mule, *cabeza de porco* ! All our trouble has been in vain.”

“ Softly, softly, my friend,” replied Manuel. “ Even if we have, as you say, secured the wrong messenger, all our trouble will *not* have been useless. You may have observed, *caro mio*, that this is a flag-officer, and he will be certain to have knowledge of a great many of Rebolledo Williams’s plans. Very well ; when he recovers we will take measures

to induce him—ha ! ha !—to tell us all he knows. After the attention of an hour or so which we will give him, and with the assistance of certain little instruments which we possess, we will get out of him all the information he has. It is wonderful,” he went on musingly, “how communicative a man will become—under certain circumstances.”

The man Carlos looked at his fellow-scoundrel for a few moments, and then broke out into a hoarse chuckle.

“All right, *querido* ; I understand,” he laughed. “We will remove him, however, for the present, to less comfortable quarters, as he seems to be on the point of recovery. Lift up his feet, *mi amigo*, while I take his arms as before.”

Suiting the action to the word, the two men seized Jim’s body and carried it away down another passage, until they came to a flight of stone stairs, down which they went into the very bowels of the earth, as it seemed. Presently they encountered a massive stone door which, on being opened, disclosed a damp and unspeakably filthy cell. Into this they tossed the unfortunate officer, and, without caring, apparently, whether they broke every bone in his body or not, kicked him unmercifully into the centre of the dungeon, and then turned and left him.

Although the two scoundrels had been under the impression that Jim Douglas was on the point of recovery from unconsciousness when they thus callously tossed him into the cell, they were mistaken ; for they found, upon revisiting him several hours later, that he was still in a state of insensibility. The two rascals then became not a little alarmed for the success of their scheme, and they at once did all in their power to revive their victim, with the result that, late that same evening, he recovered his senses, although he was much too dazed to answer the questions which they tried to put to him. The men therefore gave

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up their attempt for that night, and left Jim in peace, handing him a little bread and water, and promising themselves that they would return early the next morning.

Douglas recovered his faculties soon after Carlos and Lopés had left him, and while eating his frugal meal tried to unravel the mystery of his capture, and to calculate how long it would probably be before Admiral Williams should take any steps to find him. He was, however, still very dull and heavy, and presently dropped into a deep sleep, from which he was awakened, just as dawn was breaking, by the entrance of his captors. They immediately began to interrogate him about the number of men in the fleet, the condition of the ships, the number of their guns, and, above all, as to the plans which Admiral Williams had formed for the forthcoming attack on Peruvian ports.

Jim, of course, firmly refused to give them any information whatever upon the matters in question, but loudly denounced the way in which he had been treated, and demanded to be set at liberty immediately. Carlos and his accomplice merely laughed, and Lopés remarked: "So you refuse to tell us anything, do you, my young cockerel? Well, we shall see, we shall see. I will wager that you change your mind within the next half-hour; what say you, Carlos, eh? Now, once more will you tell me what——"

"No!" roared Douglas, in a fit of exasperation, "I will tell you *nothing*! and you may do what you please, I will still keep silent. My captain will know how to avenge me if you offer me any injury."

"Hark how loudly it crows, Manuel," laughed Carlos, showing all his teeth. "However, I think we had better not waste any more time; bring in the playthings, Lopés, my brave."

The latter went out of the cell, and presently returned,

carrying an iron brazier filled with glowing charcoal, and bearing under his left arm a cloth which, when unrolled, disclosed to Jim's horrified gaze a glittering array of instruments, the suggestiveness of the shapes of which left little doubt as to what was their ghastly use. The poor lad turned sick and faint, and the sweat began to pour off him at the mere sight of those fearful appliances. Still, he did not falter, and he swore to himself that not all their tortures should make a traitor of him.

"Now, Carlos!" exclaimed Lopés, throwing himself upon Jim, who struggled vainly to free himself from the clutches of the two powerful men who held him. In a few moments he was bound hand and foot, and Carlos removed the naval sword which they had not, as yet, taken from the young Chilian officer. Douglas was then flung on his back, and both arms and legs were lashed securely to iron rings cemented into the floor of the cell. This done, with a sardonic laugh, the two men stood upright and looked at the recumbent form of their prisoner. Then Carlos stepped across the dungeon and, chuckling all the while, thrust several of the steel instruments of torture in among the glowing charcoal of the brazier.

Half-fainting, and with every nerve and sense strained to its utmost, Jim suddenly fancied that he heard a faint sound, coming apparently from a great distance. It sounded, to his fevered imagination, almost like a bugle call, but it was so exceedingly faint that he thought his ears must have deceived him. He looked at the two rascals above him, but they were talking, and had evidently heard nothing. Carlos drew out from the brazier a long, curved piece of steel, but it was not yet red-hot and he replaced it, with a malevolent glance at Douglas.

Then suddenly there rang out, high, clear, and quite

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unmistakable, the sound of a trumpet ; and it was blown at no very great distance away, either ! Jim recognised it immediately ; it was the alarm, and he felt that some crisis was at hand.

“ *Carrajo !* ” exclaimed the man Lopés, turning a pale face to his confederate, “ what does that mean ? Run up above, man, quickly, and find out. Surely it cannot be that—— ” He broke off, as a dull boom rumbled through the stagnant air and made the very stone cell quiver. “ Quick, Carlos ; quick, man, and see what is the matter. ”

Without further bidding Carlos opened the door and sprang up the stairs, just as an appalling crash was heard, apparently quite close at hand, even if not in the very building itself. Then there was another rending explosion, and another, not quite so close at hand this time. Lopés, quivering with fear, glanced at Douglas, and then at the open door, as though meditating flight, and he had evidently just made up his mind to decamp when Carlos came plunging down the stone steps.

“ *Amigo mio !* ” he gasped hoarsely, “ something has gone terribly wrong somewhere, for the Chilian squadron is bombarding Iquique ; and what is more, all the shells are falling in this quarter. The streets are full of dead, and a man I saw flying past just now says that a body of marines is already on shore, and coming this way. We must fly at once, or we shall be too late ! Can it be that this is in return for our having seized this youngster ? Come along, my friend, quickly ; and it would be well to give the boy a tap on the head and thus spare his countrymen the trouble of carrying him away, if they find him. But, come quickly man, or we are both lost. Those cursed shells are beginning to fall in this direction again ! ”

And indeed he was right ; the dungeon fairly rocked

under the hideous concussion of the bursting missiles, while the roar of falling masonry could plainly be heard above, mingled with shrieks which came to their ears, strangely muffled by the distance.

"I don't like to leave that boy," muttered Lopés, who seemed much the cooler of the two men, "but if I stay here we shall both be buried alive. No, Mr. Officer, I will not kill you," he said, drawing back his lips from his teeth with an evil smile; "I will leave you here, so that your friends may have the satisfaction of killing you themselves!"

Then, as another fearful crash sounded above, he kicked the brazier of coal over so that the glowing embers scattered themselves over Jim's body, and, calling to his friend, exclaimed, "*Adios, señor!*" as the two men ran up the stone stairs. Jim suffered excruciating pain as the embers burnt their way through his clothes and ate into his flesh; but at length he contrived to roll and shake himself free of them. Meanwhile, his two enemies could hardly have gone a dozen steps upward when there came a most deafening concussion close by, and a shower of dust and flying fragments of masonry scattered itself round Douglas, nearly blinding him.

He felt that he was lost; for, bound as he was, he could do nothing to help himself; but as he lay there waiting for death he was astonished to find that one of the cords confining his wrists was slackening, and the next moment it had parted; a fragment of glowing charcoal had providentially fallen upon it and burnt it through. With one hand free, he found himself able, with some difficulty, to release the other; after which a few seconds were sufficient to enable him to cast loose the lashings from his feet. He then stumbled and groped his way up the steps, passing, as he did so, the mangled bodies of Lopés and of Carlos, who had been literally blown to pieces. The house above was a

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mere shapeless mass of wreckage, and Jim had little difficulty in clambering over the debris into the street. As he emerged from the wrecked building there was a rattling volley, and a shower of bullets whistled past the young officer's head. His own men were firing at him, under the impression that he was one of the enemy! He snatched a handkerchief from his pocket and waved it, just in time to avoid being riddled by a second discharge.

A moment later Douglas was shaking hands with his rescuers, who had so nearly escaped being merely his avengers. It now appeared that the coxswain of the launch, suspecting treachery, had followed Jim and his guide to the house, outside which he had waited for some time in the hope that he was mistaken, and that Jim would presently make his appearance. But when an hour had passed, the man felt convinced that something was wrong, and hurried back to the ship to report. Admiral Williams had thereupon sent an ultimatum to the *intendente* that, unless Señor Douglas was returned to the *Blanco Encalada* by daybreak, he would bombard.

The unfortunate official, knowing nothing of the occurrence complained of, had failed, of course, to produce the young man; and Rebolledo Williams had carried out his threat, very nearly destroying the man whom he wished to save in so doing. Under cover of the heavy gunfire a party of marines had been landed, and, under guidance of the coxswain, had gone toward the house where Jim was known to be. The men, seeing the place in ruins, naturally concluded that Jim was dead, and were on the point of retreating when the lad put in an appearance among the ruins.

Having happily accomplished their errand, the detachment now returned to the ships, having to fight their way back through the streets in the face of an almost overwhelming

Peruvian force. But they won through eventually, and regained their boats without great loss. That afternoon Jim reported to the admiral, who thereupon determined to bombard in grim earnest on the following morning. Needless to say Jim slept sounder that night than he had done in the dungeon on the previous evening.

CHAPTER V

The Battle between the *Esmeralda* and the *Huascar*

ON the following morning, shortly after daybreak, Rebolledo Williams began his preparations for a further bombardment of Iquique; but, just as he was on the point of opening fire, the *Blanco Encalada's* yeoman of signals presented himself with a report that the Chilian gunboat *Magellanes*—a vessel of 772 tons displacement and of eleven knots speed—had just made her appearance in the bay, coming up from the southward, and flying the signal, "Have important news to communicate." The admiral therefore ordered operations to be suspended for the moment, and waited impatiently for the captain of the *Magellanes* to come aboard and make his report. The little vessel was evidently in a hurry, for she steamed in at full speed, and did not bring up until close alongside the flagship. The anchor then splashed down to the accompaniment of a roar of chain-cable through the hawse-pipe; the captain's gig was lowered away; and a few minutes later that individual was being pulled across the short space of water between his own ship and the *Blanco Encalada*.

Captain Simpson was closeted for over an hour with his admiral; at the end of which time the signal was made for the whole fleet to heave short in readiness for an early departure. The *Magellanes* was also ordered to accompany the squadron. As the ships were to go northward at top speed it was impossible to take the *Esmeralda* along as well, in consequence of her phenomenally low rate of speed. But as she herself would be at the mercy of almost any hostile ship that might happen to heave in sight while the main body of the fleet was absent, it was decided to leave with her the gunboat *Covadonga*; and these two vessels were ordered to continue the blockade of the port to the best of their ability.

The news brought by the *Magellanes* very soon filtered through the fleet, and was to the effect that her skipper had been sent from Valparaiso to inform the admiral that the Peruvian President Prado intended to leave Callao, on the night of May 16, for Arica, in the paddle-transport *Oroya*; and that he was to be accompanied by the *Independencia*, *Huascar*, *Chalaco*, and *Limeña*. Admiral Williams was therefore ordered to abandon the blockade of Iquique, and, proceeding northward immediately, was to endeavour to intercept the squadron and, by forcing a fleet action, to destroy it, and so deal a fatal blow at the naval power of Peru. Simpson also reported that while on his way to join the flag he had fallen in, off the mouth of the river Loa, with the Peruvian warships *Union* and *Pilcomayo*, and that he had fought a running action of over two hours with them; his final escape being entirely due to his superior speed; as either of the Peruvian vessels would alone have been more than a match for his own little ship.

This news occasioned the utmost bustle and activity

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among the Chilians. Every man was most eager to be off, for the prospect of a decisive action appealed irresistibly to all, both officers and men.

Jim Douglas, however, was found by the ship's surgeon to be suffering from a very severe attack of prostration, which had doubtless been brought on by his recent experiences ashore at Iquique. Sorely against his will, he was removed aboard the little *Esmeralda*, together with a number of other sick men, the admiral having decided that since he was almost certain to be obliged to fight a severe battle, he would take with him no men save such as were absolutely sound.

Amid the commiseration of his friends, among whom was, of course, Terence O'Meara, Jim, together with other sick men from the flagship's crew, was put into a steam-launch and conveyed to the gunboat, from the deck of which he watched, half an hour later, while comfortably seated in a deck-chair, the departure of the Chilian squadron, consisting of the *Blanco Encalada*, *Almirante Cochrane*, *O'Higgins*, *Chacabuco*, *Magellanes*, and *Abtao*, the last-named being filled with combustibles so that she might serve, if necessary, as a fire-ship.

The poor lad felt very keenly disappointed at being unable to accompany the fleet and take part in the action which everybody confidently looked forward to as being inevitable ; but, had he only known it, fortune was at that moment about to smile on him, for Rebolledo Williams did not catch a glimpse of the Peruvians, while the *Esmeralda* and *Covadonga* were presently to take part in a fight which has since become world-famous, by reason of the dauntless bravery which was exhibited by the Chilians in the face of overwhelming odds.

Commander Arturo Prat, the captain of the *Esmeralda*,

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was at this time only thirty-one years of age, but was the senior officer of the two ships; the *Covadonga* was commanded by Carlos Condell, whose name has also passed into history. As has been said, Admiral Williams, having kept too close in under the land, altogether missed the Peruvian fleet, which escorted President Prado safely into Arica. The *Huascar*, Captain Grau, and the *Independencia*, Captain J. G. Moore, thereupon proceeded southward in the hope of falling in with some of the Chilian ships, and, having looked into Pisagua to make sure that the squadron of Rebolledo Williams was not lurking there, went on again toward Iquique, off which port they appeared at daybreak on the morning of May 21.

Jim, having had nearly a week in which to recover from his attack of prostration, was by this time quite himself again; and it was with keen satisfaction that he reported himself to the commander as fit for duty, upon the appearance of the two Peruvian warships. The lion-hearted captain, when he saw the enormous superiority of the vessels opposed to him, recognised at once that he would have no chance in the coming encounter; but, quite undaunted, prepared at once for action, and signalled to the *Covadonga* to do the same. Both gunboats were fortunately under steam at the time, although the little *Esmeralda's* boilers were in such a shocking condition that she could muster only sufficient power to move herself as fast as a man could walk. In a few minutes both vessels were as completely prepared for action as it was possible for them to be, and, calling aft his crew, many of whom were invalids, Prat made a short speech to them, which exhibited the lion courage of the man who has been called "the hero of Chili." He said:

"Children, the odds are against us, but our flag has

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thus far never been lowered in the presence of the enemy, and I hope that it will not be to-day. As long as I live that flag shall fly in its place; and if I die, my officers will know how to do their duty."

The men were then dismissed to their quarters, and almost immediately afterwards—at eight o'clock in the morning—the *Huascar* fired the first shot, which fell right between the two Chilean ships, and then began one of the most memorable sea-fights that have ever been recorded in history. The Chileans at once replied with every available gun, and the action instantly became fierce, the *Huascar* singling out the *Esmeralda* as her antagonist, while the *Covadonga* was attacked by the *Independencia*.

The Peruvian ironclads steamed slowly along toward their prey, the *Huascar* firing her two 10-inch turret-guns as she came, but she was somewhat handicapped by the circumstance that there was great risk of her shot striking the town, which was, of course, still in Peruvian hands. But each of these shells weighed as much as 300 pounds; and whenever they hit the unfortunate sloop at which they were aimed, the effect was terrible. One of them pierced her thin side, and penetrating to the engine-room, burst there, killing every one of the engineers, and partially disabling the crazy engines. Arturo Prat, however, immediately detached from among the invalids a squad of men to do duty in the engine-room, and redoubled his fire upon his opponent, keeping up such a furious fusillade with his small-arms that Captain Grau of the *Huascar* mistook it for machine-gun fire; and so excellent was the aim of the marksmen that it destroyed the Peruvians who were working the unprotected guns, and prevented them from being replaced.

Jim was here, there, and everywhere, encouraging and

cheering on his men, both with voice and example; but the odds were most fearfully against the Chileans. Shot fell upon the unfortunate *Esmeralda* like hail, and one of them shivered Douglas's sword in his hand as he waved it above his head. The undaunted crew of the sloop were too fully occupied with the work of fighting the *Huascar* to take any notice of what was happening in the town behind them, and suddenly a shower of shells began to hurtle over the devoted craft from shoreward. The Peruvians there had dragged down to the beach a battery of field-pieces, with which they now opened a galling fire upon the *Esmeralda*. Her present berth at once became untenable, for she had not enough men left to work the guns on both broadsides, and Commander Prat at once rang down to his engine-room for "full speed ahead," the anchor having been raised at the beginning of the action; and the doomed vessel's engines began the last revolutions that they were ever to make.

As soon as she was seen to be slowly steaming farther out into the bay, the captain of the *Huascar* determined to try to ram his opponent, and thus end the fight at once. He accordingly steamed for the *Esmeralda* at a speed of about eight knots, steering N.E., while the sloop was steering due N. but was only just moving through the water.

Douglas at once divined the intention of the Peruvian and shouted a warning to Prat, who had left the bridge for a few moments in order to assist with the repairing of a gun, the mechanism of which had become jammed, and the gallant commander immediately sprang to his bridge-telegraph, and rang for all the steam his boilers could give him. But the engineers were already getting every possible ounce of work out of the crazy machinery, and the sloop's speed could not be increased! For two dreadful minutes

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the combatants paused, as if by mutual consent, while the *Huascar* rushed onward, like some fearful sea-monster, at its prey.

But Captain Grau stopped his engines just a few seconds too soon, and the *Esmeralda* was within an ace of scraping clear. She was nearly past—only a few yards more and she would be in safety—but her wretched engines chose just that precise moment to break down, and the sloop at once lost her way. The next second the Peruvian monitor struck her with a concussion that threw every man to the deck; but the blow was fortunately a glancing one, and the *Huascar* rubbed harmlessly along the sides of the sloop, coming to a standstill alongside her in consequence of the entanglement of some raised port-shutters.

Now was the Chilean's last opportunity to snatch success out of the jaws of failure, and Captain Prat immediately seized it.

Waving his sword above his head, he shouted: "Boarders, away! Follow me all who are able!" And he sprang over the side of his ship on to the decks of the *Huascar*.

Douglas was the second man aboard the Peruvian monitor, and he raced along her deck, followed by only twelve men, in the wake of his gallant commander. The Peruvians were not prepared for the attack, as they had quite expected to sink the little sloop with the first blow of the *Huascar's* ram; but they quickly recovered from their surprise and swarmed out of the turret, and up from below, charging furiously upon the boarders, with drawn cutlasses and revolvers. Scarcely a man, it appeared, had been touched aboard the Peruvian, owing to the great thickness of her armour-plating, and her crew, being practically intact, brought an overwhelming force to bear upon the handful of invaders, who were instantly surrounded by their enemies.

There were but fourteen of them, all told, against quite a hundred of the *Huascar's* people, but they fought like the heroes they were, and repeatedly charged home with their cutlasses, into the thick of the foe. Prat, still at the head of his men, laid about him with his red-stained sword, and encouraged them, both by voice and example, in the which he was ably seconded by Douglas, who took upon himself the task of guarding his captain's rear. Cut and thrust, cut and thrust, the little band raged at the Peruvians; and for a few seconds it really seemed as though their desperate valour would prevail. But, alas, they had all long since emptied their revolvers, and only their blades remained to them, many of which had been broken by the delivery and warding of furious blows, so that many of the men were obliged to use their bare fists, or their pistols held clubwise.

Such an unequal conflict could not long endure; the Chilians were falling, man after man, but all fighting desperately to the very last. Then, from somewhere up aloft, rifle bullets began to hurtle among them, and then the end was very near. Looking upward, Douglas saw that a number of Peruvians, armed with rifles, had clambered up on the roof of the turret, and up into the *Huascar's* low fighting-tops, and were firing directly downward into them.

It was one of these bullets that put an end to the career of the gallant Chilian commander. He and Jim were fighting, shoulder to shoulder, and, at the head of only five men, were endeavouring to cut a way through their foes in order to regain their own ship. Indeed, their desperate valour had nearly carried them through when Prat, suddenly dropping his reeking sword, put both hands up to his face, and, after swaying on his feet for a second, fell into

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Jim's arms. His face, as Douglas saw when the dead hands fell away, was literally shot to pieces by at least half a dozen bullets which must have struck simultaneously. Nothing could be done for the gallant sailor, for he must have died instantaneously, so Jim allowed him to sink gently to the deck, and took up his own defence again. There were only two men now left, beside himself, and escape seemed absolutely hopeless, when a volley of rifle bullets plumped into the circle of Peruvians, evidently fired by some of the few remaining members of the sloop's crew. Taken by surprise, the Peruvians scattered for a moment; and Jim, with the two Chilean seamen, took advantage of the opening and dashed through the crowd, gaining the *Huascar's* side in safety. But to his horror he found that the two ships had drifted apart, and that the *Esmeralda* was even now steaming away, at a very slow speed, certainly, but still far beyond the reach of the three deserted men on the *Huascar*!

Jim took one hasty look round and then, putting his hands above his head, plunged downward into the sea, and began to strike out after his own ship. A few bullets splashed harmlessly into the water alongside him, and then the Peruvians turned their attention to other and larger prey. The *Huascar* went ahead once more and, taking a wide circle, presented her stem once more at the unfortunate *Esmeralda*. Jim then recognised that the sloop was doomed, and that it would be of no use for him to strive to regain her. It would be better to endeavour to reach the *Covadonga*, should she still be afloat, and he looked round to see whether he could see her.

To his great surprise, even as he was looking for her, he heard a shout and saw the gunboat heading directly for him, with the *Independencia* in hot pursuit. Carlos Condell,

seeing the fate of his consort, and realising that he was hopelessly outmatched, had evidently determined to retreat while his engines were still intact; and the *Covadonga* was now heading out of the bay at full speed to the southward.

For a moment Douglas thought that the ship would run over him, but a second glance showed him that it was evidently Condell's intention to try to pick him up. As the *Covadonga* approached, her captain sent his engines hard astern, checking the vessel's speed sufficiently to allow of Jim being picked up by a rope which, already noosed, was cleverly thrown to him.

Although the lad thought that his body must certainly be torn in half by the strain upon the rope, he was safely hauled aboard and deposited on deck, whereupon Captain Condell again sent his engines ahead at full speed and resumed his flight. Jim was soon upon his feet again, and almost before he had fully recovered his breath an officer came up to him to tell him that Commander Condell wished to see him, in order to receive a report from him as to what had, up to now, occurred aboard the *Esmeralda*. Jim therefore made his way to the little conning-tower where Carlos Condell was directing the fighting of his ship; but before he had time to enter he saw the final act in the fight between the *Huascar* and the *Esmeralda*.

The Peruvian had dashed straight at the sloop and, stopping his engines when only eighty feet away from her, had struck her fairly on the starboard broadside, piercing a huge hole in her side, through which the water poured in cataracts. That finished the fight; and at ten minutes after twelve o'clock mid-day the gallant little *Esmeralda*, with her colours still flying, and guns still firing, plunged downward out of sight into the deep blue waters of Iquique bay, having fought a most heroic battle against overwhelming odds.

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Jim was not long in making his report to Captain Condell, and with a glance at the *Independencia*, which was hard upon the *Covadonga's* heels, firing as she came, he now ran down below to change into dry clothes and equip himself with another sword and revolver ; having, of course, lost his own when he jumped into the sea.

The *Independencia* was a slightly faster craft than the *Covadonga*, but she drew a good deal more water ; and Captain Condell, with masterly skill, availed himself of this circumstance to the full, by running across shoals over which the Peruvian ship dared not follow him, and by keeping quite close in to the shore where she could not approach. Luckily, too, the *Independencia's* gunners were raw, and found great difficulty in hitting the little gunboat ; but whenever they did the execution on board the small craft was tremendous, by reason of the huge size of the projectiles.

At last, finding that he could not hit the *Covadonga* in a vital spot, or bring her to a standstill, Captain Moore, the Peruvian captain, determined to risk his own ship in an endeavour to bring the running fight to a close. The combatants were now off Punto Grueso, where the shore was steeper, and the water consequently of greater depth, and Moore decided to ram his opponent. He gradually edged closer and closer to the *Covadonga*—continually firing his heavy guns, to which the Chilean replied with a withering small-arm fire—until he was separated by only about a cable's length from the gunboat.

He now suddenly changed his course from S. to S.S.E. and steered straight for the *Covadonga*, which was within a hundred yards of the beach, and had herself just touched a rock in her passage over it. But alas for the Peruvian, she missed her blow, and struck immediately upon the rock

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over which the gunboat had a moment before passed, becoming immovably fixed there.

“Now,” roared Condell to the helmsman, “up with the helm, and we will go about and destroy that fellow completely. Señor Douglas,” he continued, to Jim, “kindly go down and superintend the working of that forward 70-pounder gun; I am told that the lieutenant in charge has been killed by the *Independencia’s* last shot.”

Jim ran off, as requested, and took charge of the weapon, while the *Covadonga*, describing a wide curve, wheeled round until she presented her bow to the wrecked Peruvian, and at a distance of about half a mile, began to plump shell right into her stern. Jim made excellent practice with the gun, and put shot after shot into the hapless vessel, each of which, entering her stern, passed through the whole length of the ship, finally setting her on fire in several places. Then, the *Independencia’s* hull having very nearly filled with water, she fell over on her side and became a complete wreck. Jim, however, still continued his firing until a man on board the Peruvian crawled aft and, hauling down the colours, hoisted a white flag in its place. The *Covadonga* then, and only then, ceased firing.

But unfortunately she could not enjoy the fruits of her victory, for, at the very moment when the Peruvian surrendered, the *Huascar*, having picked up the survivors of the *Esmeralda’s* crew, made her appearance beyond the western end of the island which forms the south side of the bay of Iquique. The gunboat was, of course, no match for the monitor; and Condell was therefore reluctantly compelled to abandon the *Independencia* and seek his own safety in flight to the southward.

Jim therefore fired a gun in defiance at the *Huascar*, which immediately took up the pursuit, and the *Covadonga*

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steamed away toward Antofagasta, which she reached on the following day, having run the *Huascar* out of sight; that ship being unable to steam very fast in consequence of an injury to her bow, caused by the ramming of the *Esmeralda*.

CHAPTER VI

The Inca's Prophecy

ON reaching Antofagasta the *Covadonga* went into the roads and lay inside the reef which stretches across their entrance ; and there, her captain, Carlos Condell, telegraphed to Valparaiso, giving details of the previous day's fight, and asking for further orders, while he set about repairing the very extensive damage which had been sustained by his ship in her fight with the *Independencia*. On the following day Condell received news from Valparaiso to the effect that the Chilean fleet had gone north to Callao ; and was instructed that he himself was to rejoin as soon as he received word from Iquique that Admiral Williams had returned to that port. He was further instructed to proceed, meanwhile, as rapidly as possible, with the repairs to his own ship.

The gunboat was accordingly hauled alongside the wharf at Antofagasta, her heavy guns were lifted out of her, and the vessel was careened in order that the shot-holes below her water-line might be plugged.

As the work on the *Covadonga* would, it was expected, occupy at least a fortnight, Jim Douglas applied to Commander Condell for leave to go ashore occasionally, that he might explore the quaint old town, which dated back to a

period long anterior to the conquest of Peru by Pizarro and his band of adventurers.

During his short sojourn on board the *Covadonga* Jim had formed a rather intimate acquaintanceship with her first lieutenant, a man named Jorge Montt; and one evening, after he had returned from one of his periodical surveys of the town, Jim entered the tiny mess-room to find Montt discoursing at length to an eager circle of listeners upon the legends and traditions of old Peru.

“Yes,” Montt was saying, as Douglas entered, “it is an undisputed fact that there are thousands—nay, tens of thousands—of the descendants of the ancient Inca race now living in Peru, Bolivia, and upper Chili, who implicitly believe that a time will come when the Incas will regain their old supremacy, drive all the Latin races out of this part of South America, and re-establish the old Inca monarchy once more, in all its pristine glory. You know, of course, that there are many stories extant in this country as to the existence of vast hoards of buried treasure? Well, it is prophesied, I believe, that one day a man shall arise in Peru who shall head a vast Indian insurrection and drive the ‘oppressors’ into the sea; and his power will, it is said, be derived from these enormous hoards of buried treasure, the locality of which is well known among the Incas, and which will be revealed to the ‘Libertador’—when he makes his appearance. The study of these Indian traditions is very interesting, I assure you, gentlemen,” he concluded.

“But then,” remarked Jim, who had sat down and was listening intently, “nearly all semi-civilised races have traditions of the same sort. Take the North American Indians, for instance; or the Zulus. Why, even the Chinese believe that one day a chief will arise among them who

shall lead them to the conquest of the whole world! I do not think there is very much in these old legends. Every nation has them, in some form or other."

"Yes, that is so," agreed Montt; "but I have studied the history of the Inca races very closely, and, so far as my experience goes, there is no nation on earth whose prophecies are so likely to come to pass as are theirs. I am personally aware of many occasions on which prophecies made by members of this strange race have come true in the most marvellous way. For myself, I feel convinced that the Incas really have some means, unknown to us, of foretelling future events; for I once visited in my youth an old woman in this very town of Antofagasta, who prophesied many things about my future, many of which have, so far, come true, and the rest of which will doubtless happen in due time."

Montt finished his remarks to the accompaniment of a chorus of derisive laughter, and a number of voices were raised in protest against his attempted imposition upon their credulity. Whereupon the lieutenant became somewhat angry, and replied shortly:

"Well, gentlemen, you may believe me or not, as you please; but it is the truth that I am telling you; and I can take you to that identical personage, if you wish, for I believe she still lives here, and you can therefore experiment for yourselves, should you feel so inclined. For my own part I believe implicitly everything that she told me. Now, are any of you willing to accompany me to this Inca woman's house and put her powers to the test?"

There was a lengthy pause, for all the officers were either Chilians or of Chilian descent, and the South American races are notoriously superstitious. But Jim, being an Englishman, had no qualms; and he felt, for

some reason or other, a great curiosity to see this strange personage. He therefore replied :

“Well, Montt, if none of these other gentlemen feel disposed to go with you, perhaps you will have no objection to take me? I am very much interested in all matters of this kind, and I have been impressed by what you have just told us. I should very much like to go with you, if you don't mind.”

Montt bowed gravely and answered: “By all means, Señor Douglas; I shall be only too pleased; for I am sure that the woman would interest you, whether you believe in second sight or not. I shall be off duty to-morrow evening, after six o'clock. We shall dine at half-past, as usual, I suppose: how would half-past seven suit you as the time for going ashore? We could be back before midnight, easily, if we went at that time.”

“Yes,” Douglas agreed, “that time will suit me very well, Señor Montt; and I shall look forward to our expedition with great interest.”

The conversation then turned upon other matters, and the subject was dropped; but the next evening, after dinner, Douglas reminded Montt of their arrangement; and the two men, dressing themselves in mufti, stepped off the *Covadonga* on to the wharf, and made their way up into the town.

They walked along the sea-front, where the horse-trams were wont to ply before the electric cars were introduced, right away up to the north end of the promenade, until they came to the Hôtel de Sucre, where they turned off to the right, up a very narrow and badly-lighted side-street, which conducted them into a part of the city very much resembling the place in Iquique into which Jim had been inveigled. Indeed Jim began to have some doubts as to the wisdom

of their little adventure when he saw the evil glances and scowls of hatred which everywhere met them on their progress; for it was not so very long that the Chilians had occupied the place.

However, Montt betrayed not the slightest uneasiness, and assured his friend that the Bolivians always looked askance at strangers in the city, and as they were both dressed in mufti, so that their connection with the Chilians was not apparent, the young Englishman decided not to worry himself about the matter, but to trust entirely to his companion's discretion.

They traversed a number of narrow side-streets and gloomy alleys, and presently came out in the broad *Plaza de la Libertad*, where some patriotic orator was volubly holding forth about the rights of man and the iniquity of the Chilian invasion. Montt hurriedly seized Jim's arm as the Englishman was on the point of crossing the road to hear what the orator had to say, and guided him away to the left, so that they skirted the *plaza* instead of crossing it.

"The people seem in rather an excitable mood to-night," said the lieutenant; "we had therefore better make ourselves as inconspicuous as possible. I wonder what has occurred? Possibly there may have been some battle, in which the Bolivians have been defeated. I would not have come ashore had I thought that the city was likely to be in this state of unrest. However, as we are here we may as well go forward; so come along, and let us get away from this frothing volcano as soon as we can. We will turn down this side-street; it is not very much out of our way, and we shall be out of sight of the crowd all the sooner."

Jim readily acquiesced, as a good many of the people whom they met seemed to regard them with anything but

friendly glances, and the two men hurried away down the *Callé San Antonio*, where they soon got out of range of the angry growling of the mob.

"Can't imagine what's wrong here to-night," muttered Montt, in a low voice, "but it must be either, as I said, that we have defeated their countrymen somewhere on land, or else that one of our ships has sunk or captured the *Huascar*; nothing less would, I imagine, have roused them to such a pitch of excitement. We Chilians are maintaining a ridiculously small army of occupation here; far too small for the purpose, in my opinion; and if the Bolivians were to turn restive, as they seem very much inclined to do, we should have rather a bad time of it, I am afraid. However, we are not far away from the house where this old Inca witch-woman, or whatever she calls herself, lives. It used to be in one of the small hovels on the right side of the street we are just coming to."

They turned into the street—or, rather, alley—indicated by Montt, and at once found themselves in a cobble-paved and exceedingly ill-lighted thoroughfare, flanked on either side by a curious assortment of huge, old-time houses, which were doubtless, at one period, the dwellings of high Government officials, and tiny, tumbledown hovels, which seemed to have sprung up, like fungi or some other evil growth, on the small spaces of ground which had formerly been left vacant between the larger houses.

Half-way down this evil-looking, evil-smelling, and squalid alley Montt called a halt and, looking round carefully, remarked:

"Now, Señor Douglas, so far as I can remember—for it is a good many years since I was here before—this is the house; but as I see no sign of any light in the place, the old woman may have gone away, or died. However,

having come thus far, we will try our luck." And the lieutenant knocked softly upon the door.

The sound echoed dully through the little building, but otherwise the silence remained unbroken; it seemed as though the place was indeed deserted.

"*Caramba!*" exclaimed Montt, "I don't believe there is anybody here, after all; what a pity! I do not care to knock too loudly, either, for fear of attracting the attention of the neighbours. They are a queer lot down in this quarter, I can tell you. Hallo! did you hear anything moving inside there, just then, Douglas?"

Jim listened intently for a few seconds, then replied: "Yes, I think I *do* hear something prowling about in there, but—upon my word, Montt, it sounds more like a—a—well, an animal than a human being; and—what a very curious smell there is; quite like—let me see——" here the young officer sniffed several times—"yes," he continued after a pause, "it is quite like the odour of a wild beast!"

"*Per Dios!* you are right," exclaimed the lieutenant, sniffing in turn. "And I remember that last time I visited this place the old woman certainly seemed to carry with her an uncanny, musty, animal odour. Therefore it is probably she. I will knock again."

Montt thereupon drew from his jacket pocket a revolver, which he had taken the precaution to bring with him, and tapped softly on the door with its butt.

This time there followed a plainly perceptible "shuffle-shuffle" like the soft padding of a heavy animal's paws, and both men started violently when, directly afterward, and from the other side of the door, a whining voice inquired—

"Who knocks at my door? Go away, whoever you are. I am a poor, lone old woman, and if you dis——"

"Are you the Inca woman, Mama Huello?" broke in

Montt ; “for, if so, we wish to consult you. We are two naval officers who have heard of your wonderful powers of foretelling the future, and we should like to have a demonstration of them.”

There was a pause, and then the whining voice replied : “Yes, I am the Mama Huello ; wait ye there for a short time, while I prepare for your reception.”

Again that curious shuffling sound was heard, and Jim somehow felt a shiver of fear run down his spine. It was only a disordered fancy, of course ; but to him it certainly seemed as though the voice proceeded from an animal, rather than from a human being. Then Montt remarked :

“She must surely have a big dog, or some other pet animal with her, I should think, for I distinctly heard the ‘pad-pad’ of paws when the Mama turned away. I hope the creature will not attempt to worry us, under the impression that we mean harm to the old woman.”

Jim did not reply. He felt instinctively that they would find no animal there when they entered the house ; but he had no further time for reflection, for, at that moment, the door opened with startling suddenness, and a voice invited them to enter.

Montt stepped inside, and Jim followed close upon his heels. The door shut after them, of its own accord, apparently ; and they found themselves in a narrow stone-flagged passage, which was dimly lighted by an oil-lamp with a large red shade over it. The whitewashed walls were covered with all manner of hieroglyphs and drawings, the meaning of which Jim could not fathom. Nor had he much time to examine them, for the voice of the Mama, still proceeding from some unseen quarter, invited them to go forward, and they presently found themselves in a large apartment, built of stone, upon the walls of which hung

rich silks and cloths made of vicuña-wool, together with a number of other articles, evidently of ancient native manufacture, the like of which the young Englishman had never seen before. To say that he was astonished at the barbaric splendour of the apartment is to put it very mildly ; and he could not understand how it was that such an apparently diminutive house could contain a room of such large size as the one in which he now stood.

But he soon forgot his astonishment in watching the extraordinary owner of the place. She was a wizened little woman, of an age far beyond the allotted threescore years and ten, if appearances went for anything ; but it was her face and hands that riveted Jim's attention and excited his disgust. Her features bore a strongly marked resemblance to those of an animal of the cat species, and her teeth were all pointed instead of being square ; while her hands resembled claws, the fingers were hooked and skinny, and the nails were discoloured and extraordinarily long. Taken altogether, it was a personality to excite repulsion and fear in any one brought in contact with it, and Douglas felt another strong shiver run down his back as he looked at her. She stood in the middle of the room, leaning upon a thick ebony stick, and peering out from beneath her overhanging eyebrows at the two young officers, with an expression which they could not quite fathom, and which seemed to be reading their very souls. Then Montt pulled himself together and remarked :

“We have heard of your powers, Mama, and we have come to ask you to foretell the future to us. As I said before, we are both naval officers in the service of—well—I won't say what country ; and we are anxious to learn what may be in store for us. Will you read our lives ? ”

“Sit ye both down there,” replied the old crone, point-

ing to a richly cushioned couch which was placed against one of the walls. "If ye really wish to know the future I can tell it ye. Oh yes, the Mama can tell ye. You, Don Jorge Montt, have visited me before—seven years ago; and I told you many things about your future. Have they yet come to pass?"

Montt started. He had not expected that she would again recognise him, for he was very much changed in appearance; and her remembrance of his name, and the date when he last visited her, seemed rather to savour of the uncanny.

"Yes, Mama," he replied, "I did visit you at the time you mention; and all that you told me has, so far, proved true. But men's actions govern their lives, and I thought that, perhaps, mine might have altered my future. You did not forecast a very prosperous career for me then, you know."

"You speak truth, Don Jorge," replied the woman. "Your brave deeds in the past have indeed influenced your future; and methinks I shall see great things in store for you. I will read your future first, my officer," she went on. "Come over here, and sit in this chair. Yes, that is it. Now do not speak until I give you permission; nor you either, Señor Englishman. Ha! You wonder how I know your nationality, do you not? I will show you stranger things than that, however, before you leave."

Montt having taken his seat in the chair, as directed, the Mama brought from a corner of the room a large copper brazier, on the top of which was a bowl of the same metal. Having filled the brazier with hot coals, which she took from a fire burning in the open hearth, she waited patiently for the metal bowl to become hot.

After the lapse of perhaps ten minutes the copper basin began to glow dully red, and the witch-woman thereupon

poured into it some powder, which she took from a little gold casket.

Immediately a great cloud of smoke rushed up from the bowl, and, to Jim's unbounded amazement, hung suspended over it, without mingling with the air of the room, as he had expected it would. At the same time a delightful odour greeted his nostrils, and he began to experience a delicious sensation of drowsiness stealing over him, while to his ears there seemed to come a faint sound as of music being played at a distance. The outlines of the room began to vanish and fade away, little by little, until the only thing that remained before his eyes was the column, or rather ball, of smoke which now appeared gradually to assume larger dimensions, until at length he seemed to be looking into a dense mist, wherein he could at that moment discern nothing. And all the time his sensation of drowsiness was becoming stronger and still stronger, until he seemed to be in a state of semi-coma, very much like that induced by the use of opium.

Then, quite suddenly, his lassitude left him, his senses became preternaturally acute, and a sense of well-being and complete satisfaction pervaded his whole being. The mist into which he was gazing became faintly luminous, and strange shapes began to flit across it; shapes the like of which he had never seen in his life before. Then something approached him and rested its head upon his knee. He looked down and saw that the "something" was a huge jaguar or South American tiger; and it bore a striking resemblance to the woman, Mama Huello. But, strange to say, Jim felt no sensation of fear; instead, his whole being seemed to be quivering with eagerness to see what was to be displayed upon the curtain of mist, still stretched before him.

The light became stronger and stronger, and the cloud more luminous, until it seemed to be a mass of living flame ; and presently, out of the mist, pictures began to shape themselves one after another, in rapid succession.

Jim saw his friend, Montt, as the central figure in many battles, conducting himself with unexampled bravery, and covering himself with glory. Scenes occurred which Douglas knew, instinctively, related to the war at present in progress. He saw the lieutenant in command of a small gunboat fighting an action against a whole Peruvian fleet, and coming off victorious, though sorely wounded. Then many years seemed to elapse, during which Montt had apparently attained to a high position in the Chilian navy. The country was now divided against itself, was in the throes of revolution, and Montt was the leading spirit among the insurgents. He carried all before him by the magic of his consummate genius, and out of anarchy created concord. Then the scene changed again, and Jim beheld the representation of a broad *plaza* in some city which he had never visited but which some sixth sense told him was Santiago de Chili. Montt, now supreme head of the Chilian navy, was just issuing from a building fronting on the square. It was night-time, and the man was clothed in a heavy black cloak which he had flung round his shoulders. Montt descended the steps leading from the house, and started to walk across the square, when suddenly, from behind the large fountain which played in the middle of the *plaza*, there sprang four men, all masked and armed with knives. There was a brief struggle, a shrill scream, and Montt fell pierced by the daggers of his enemies.

Then the scene vanished from before Jim's eyes, and he knew that his own future was about to be presented to him. He saw himself once more back on board the *Blanco*

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Encalada, and knew that that ship, together with another Chilian vessel, was engaged in a fierce fight with a Peruvian ironclad, the name of which was hidden from him. The Chilians were victorious, although the carnage on both sides had been enormous, and Jim perceived that he himself had been wounded. Several other actions passed across the screen of mist, in all of which Douglas took a leading part, distinguishing himself brilliantly, and receiving rapid promotion. The scene then changed from sea to land, and Jim knew that he was detailed for shore service in some obscure town among the Bolivian mountains. He could distinctly see the whole picture laid out before him, and he knew instinctively that some great good fortune was awaiting him when the time should come for him to visit that place.

As he stood, or rather seemed to stand, gazing out over the scene, it vanished from before his eyes; and a voice, like that of the Mama Huello, spoke, saying:

“You, Señor Englishman, shall come to great honours through your own exertions and bravery; but I also see great riches before you, of which you shall obtain possession with but little trouble on your part. They are still under the earth, but in due time, and in a manner little suspected by you, their whereabouts shall be revealed to you, and you shall become a great man and a powerful chief in the land of your adoption.”

The voice ceased, and a rumbling sound seemed to make itself heard in Jim's ears. Then the cloud of mist slowly dissolved, and the outlines of the room wherein he was seated gradually came back to his senses. Yes, there was the copper brazier, but the glow had vanished from the coals, which were now black and cold. Montt was still seated in his chair, looking like a statue carved out of

marble, and Jim found himself still on the couch whereon he had first placed himself. The curious feeling of drowsiness gradually left him, and the figure of Mama Huello appeared, still standing close to Montt and the copper brazier, apparently in the same position as she had taken up when the mist began to appear before his eyes, and she was laughing, a grim, noiseless chuckle that disclosed all her white, pointed teeth.

Suddenly the spell broke, and Montt and Jim rose to their feet simultaneously, the former wiping the cold perspiration from his brow, and smiling in a curiously strained manner.

"Well, Mama," he said, "you have shown us some very strange things, I must say. I only hope that the last part of your prophecy concerning myself will not come true. Here you are, Mama," he went on, feeling in his pockets for a coin, "here is a five-*pésos* piece for you. I hope you will consider the payment sufficient."

The old Inca woman grabbed the coin and hid it away in the recesses of her girdle. "Quite sufficient, gallant cavalier," she replied. "Your generosity has not withered with the years. You are a brave man; and I would that I might have shown you a more pleasant ending to your life; but fate is fate, and there is no changing it. *Adios, señores, adios*; I do not think we shall ever meet again. You, Señor Englishman, go forward to honour and fame; while you, Don Jorge Montt, go forward to honour and—death! But you will meet it with the brave heart; and it will not be very bitter when it comes."

By this time the two men had reached the door, which the Mama now opened, and a moment later Montt and Douglas were in the street, which was now illuminated by the rays of the full moon. As the door closed behind them

Montt shivered, although the night was oppressively hot, and Jim could have sworn that he heard the sound of an animal's pads retreating down the passage behind them.

The two men swiftly pulled themselves together, however, and started off for the *Covadonga*, which they reached just as the first faint flush of dawn made its appearance in the eastern sky.

CHAPTER VII

A Night Attack

THE day following the joint adventure of Douglas and Montt in Antofagasta a telegram arrived for the skipper of the *Covadonga*, ordering him to leave the place immediately, and rejoin the flag at Valparaiso without delay. All shore-leave was accordingly stopped, and that same evening the gunboat raised her anchor and steamed out of Chimba Bay, on her way to the headquarters port. The telegram had also contained a warning that the Peruvian warships *Huascar* and *Union* were prowling up and down the coast, and, as each one separately was a good deal more than a match for the little *Covadonga*, it behoved her captain to keep a very sharp look-out for any sign of the enemy, especially as the gunboat was not fast enough to enable her to rely upon her speed for safety.

Men were, consequently, posted at the mastheads, with orders to report directly any sign of a strange ship was seen, and the ship slid slowly along under the stars, keeping as close in to the land as possible. As soon as his watch was at an end that night, Douglas, feeling rather tired after his experience of the previous evening, went down below and turned into his bunk ; and it was not very long before he was in the land of dreams.

It seemed to him that he had only just fallen asleep when he was rudely awakened by a commotion up on deck. He lay half awake in his bunk for a minute or two, and heard men running about overhead, the sound of excited voices shouting, and then, loud and clear above the uproar, rang out Carlos Condell's voice giving orders for the men to be called to quarters and the guns to be cast loose. Evidently, thought Jim, there was more fighting in the wind. He quickly tumbled into his clothes, slung his uniform ulster over his shoulders, for the night was cold, and stumbled up on deck, every pulse in him throbbing with excitement at the anticipation of another encounter with the enemy.

As he dashed up through the hatchway he cannoned into, and almost knocked down, his friend Montt, who was rushing forward with orders from the skipper.

"Hallo, Montt!" Jim ejaculated, "what's the matter this time?"

"Two steamers have just been sighted coming out of Chañeral Bay, and heading this way," returned the Chilean, breathlessly. "They are believed to be the *Huascar* and the corvette *Union*, and it looks as though they had been up to some mischief in there, for there is a big glare away to the south-east—there, you can see it for yourself!—which seems to point to their having set something on fire. But you mustn't keep me now, my friend, for it is 'all hands to quarters and prepare for action'; and, if it should prove to be as we believe, we shall have a tough fight to get clear of these two fellows." And the gallant first lieutenant bustled away to carry out his orders.

Looking in the direction indicated by Montt, Jim could plainly see the dull, lurid glare of a large fire away to the south-east; and, outlined sharply against the glow, he could

also make out, even from the level of the deck, a brig-rigged steamer, which could be none other than the Peruvian monitor; and she was accompanied by a large, three-masted, ship-rigged steamer which was undoubtedly the corvette *Union*. Whether the enemy had yet sighted the *Covadonga* was still doubtful, for the gunboat was close in under the high cliffs which formed the coastline at that point, and they would hardly be on the look-out for a vessel so near in to the land. But when they got nearer to her they could hardly help sighting her; and her only hope of ultimate escape was to avoid detection, if possible, until she was nearly abreast of the Peruvians, and then to make a running fight of it, trusting more to her heels than to her fighting powers to enable her to get away.

But the *Covadonga* could scarcely hope to avoid a fight of some sort; and her gallant skipper, Condell, was not at all the sort of man to wish to do so. He would at any time much rather stay and fight than run, even though hopelessly outmatched; but orders were orders, and he was wanted at Valparaiso, so for once he was forced to acknowledge discretion as the better part of valour.

At this moment, the "word" having been quietly passed, the men came tumbling up on deck, and Jim was obliged to abandon his survey of the Peruvians and attend to his duty of getting his own particular battery of guns ready for the coming encounter. In about ten minutes everything was prepared, and Montt, the first lieutenant, marched into the tiny conning-tower and reported to Condell, "Ship cleared for action, sir." Jim was then free, for a short time at any rate, to turn his attention once more to the swiftly approaching steamers, which were travelling so fast as to give the impression that they feared pursuit.

"If," mused Jim, "the *Almirante Cochrane* or some other

of our ships are really after these fellows it will probably mean the saving of us, for the *Huascar* and the *Union* will in that case hardly dare to remain and fight against us. Ah !——” he continued, as he saw a rocket stream up into the air from the *Huascar*, “they have sighted us, that is clear, and we shall have to fight after all. Yes ; here they come ! They are both altering their course now, and heading directly for us. I was afraid we should not escape detection.”

The Peruvians, which had been heading off the land, had now turned slightly, and were pointing about N.N.W., directly for the spot where the *Covadonga* was creeping along under the land, and Jim could see the dull red glare above their funnels which showed that the stokers were coaling up vigorously.

Condell now shouted down the voice-tube to the engine-room, ordering the staff to let him have as much steam as the boilers would carry, and rang for full speed at the same time. The little gunboat began to quiver from stem to stern, from truck to keel, under the increased pulsations of the throbbing screw, while the curl of white water at her bows gradually crept higher and still higher up her stem as her speed increased, until she swept along at her best pace of about nine knots in the hour.

As she ran down the coast the *Huascar* and the *Union* both pointed their bows more and more shoreward, as if to cut off the gunboat ; and it began to look very much as though there was no hope for the *Covadonga*, when suddenly another rocket, blue this time, soared up from the monitor, and she described a wide circle seaward once more, her consort following her example. Jim immediately guessed that Admiral Grau had, like a prudent man, had a lead-man at work on board his ship, and that the Peruvian

skipper had suddenly found himself in danger of running aground through standing so close inshore.

The two hostile warships then eased down to half speed, and kept on a course parallel with the shore, and at a distance of about a mile away from it. As the *Covadonga* herself was obliged, by reason of shoals and sunken reefs, to keep at a distance of quite half a mile from the beach, this left her an avenue of escape just about half a mile in width. But although the *Huascar* and the *Union* could not approach closer than eight or nine hundred yards from the gunboat, she would still have to run the gauntlet of their fire, and they could easily destroy her, by gun-fire alone, at six times that distance. There did not appear to be very much hope for the *Covadonga*, thought Jim, unless she could somehow manage to disable her antagonists—a very unlikely contingency, owing to the smallness of her guns, or unless a Chilean ship should happen to be in the neighbourhood and be attracted to the spot by the sound of the firing which was bound to open in a few minutes.

When the *Covadonga* had approached to within about a mile of the Peruvian ironclads, Jim saw the *Huascar* go about and heave to, with her bows pointing to the south, while the *Union* came foaming along on her original course, which was parallel to that of the gunboat, and about half a mile distant from it to seaward.

“Aha!” thought he to himself, “so that is the manœuvre, is it? Grau is going to get us between two fires if he can. As soon as the corvette is past us she too will swing round and attack us with her bow-guns while the *Huascar* rakes us with her stern weapons. It looks as though the *Covadonga* were in for a hot time!”

The young Englishman’s surmise soon proved correct; for directly the *Union* had passed out of the line of fire the

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Huascar opened with one of her turret 300-pounder guns. The first shell passed close ahead of the gunboat, but it was aimed much too high, and struck the cliffs on the *Covadonga's* port beam, exploding with a brilliant flash of light and a roaring concussion that sent ton after ton of rock hurtling down into the sea. The corvette was now abreast of the Chilean ship, and as she drew level she let fly her whole broadside, consisting of one 100-pounder, one 70-pounder, and six 40-pounders, at the devoted gunboat.

The effect was as though a hurricane of fire and steel had broken loose aboard the *Covadonga*. Three of her smaller machine guns, together with their crews, were blown to atoms, while her bulwarks were levelled with the decks in several places. The execution on board was terrible; and Jim had an exceedingly narrow escape, for at the moment when the *Union* fired he was just entering the little conning-tower with a communication for Captain Condell, and a 100-pounder shell struck full upon one of the *Covadonga's* 70-pounder gun-shields, tearing a portion of it away. It then burst into a thousand fragments, one of which whizzed past Jim's head and struck the conning-tower beside him with such force that the piece of metal weighing several pounds was firmly embedded in the soft steel of which the tower was constructed, while Jim was dazed with the shock and half blinded by the flying iron dust and grains of powder.

He managed to stagger inside the citadel just as the *Huascar* let fly with one of her 40-pounder guns, the shell from which struck full upon the very spot on the deck where he had been standing ten seconds previously, ripping a huge hole in the iron sheathing with which it was covered, and then exploding right over the engine-

room hatch, which luckily was protected by a bomb-proof grating.

When Jim had at length cleared his eyes of dust and powder he delivered his message to the captain and was about to leave, but Condell requested him to remain, saying that he might want to make use of him. Montt was in the conning-tower, carrying out Condell's orders as to the working of the engines, while the skipper himself watched carefully through the narrow observation-slit in the citadel, waiting for the moment when he might begin to open an effectual fire upon the enemy.

At length the moment arrived. The *Covadonga* had come up level with the Peruvian monitor, and the *Union*, being obliged to circle to seaward as she found herself in shoal water, was about three-quarters of a mile astern, although still firing incessantly. Condell gave one last look round and then shouted "*Fire!*" through the voice-tube which led to the gunboat's little turret. Immediately there came a deafening roar and a tremendous concussion, as the two 70-pounders hurled forth their shells at the *Huascar*, and a dense cloud of white smoke drifted down upon the conning-tower, filling it with acrid fumes and momentarily blotting out the view.

When it cleared away it was seen that it had been a most lucky discharge, for one shell had struck full upon the monitor's military mast, causing it to fall lengthwise along the ship, partly wrecking the funnel and a number of ventilators, while the other had apparently penetrated an open gun-port and thus reached some part of the ship's boiler-room, for columns of steam were seen issuing from every available opening on the monitor's midship section.

"Load again, men; load again!" cried Douglas, quite forgetting himself in the excitement of the moment.

“Another discharge like that, and we shall have the fellow completely crippled. Hurrah for the gallant little *Covadonga*!”

He was recalled to his senses by a short, sharp laugh from Condell, who remarked, with a grim smile: “Surely, Señor Douglas, you are not going to take away the command of my ship from me, are you?”

Jim, of course, promptly apologised, explaining that it was owing to the excitement that he had forgotten himself, but Condell told him to think no more of it, as it was the sort of spirit that he liked to see a young man display. There was little time for conversation, however, for the *Huascar*, as though in revenge for the damage inflicted by her puny enemy, again discharged her whole broadside—or at least so much of it as was still capable of being fired; and the marksmanship was so excellent that every missile again struck the *Covadonga*, while at the same moment the *Union* again started firing with her bow guns, and a 100-pounder shell struck the gunboat full upon the stern, blowing a huge hole in it, killing four men, and shooting away the ensign-staff and flag.

When the smoke cleared away Douglas saw that their flag was gone, and at the same time heard the sound of cheering coming across the water from the *Huascar*—the Peruvians were under the impression that the gunboat had struck! But they were soon to be undeceived, for Jim rushed out of the conning-tower and down below, presently reappearing with another ensign under his arm. He then ran aft and proceeded to fix the spare staff, under a perfect hail of rifle-bullets from the monitor and corvette, and, having done so, ran up the flag amid cheers from the *Covadonga*. Then he went forward once more to his place in the conning-tower, which he reached just as

Condell gave orders for the battery of 70-pounders to be fired again.

“Bravely done, gallantly done, my young friend,” said the skipper, as Jim made his appearance; “I won’t forget that action of yours if we come through all right.”

Both of the *Covadonga’s* shells at this moment burst on board the monitor, one of them blowing her short squat funnel clean over the side, while the other, by one of the strange happenings of war, entered her hull through the same gun-port as the previous shell, working still further havoc in the *Huascar’s* engine-room.

The gunboat had by this time drawn considerably ahead of the monitor, and Condell soon saw that the latter was too seriously crippled in her engines to pursue. Yet she still continued firing with deadly effect, and the *Union* was slowly but surely creeping up astern. The skipper therefore ordered his men to turn their whole attention to the corvette and try to disable her also, since they would soon be beyond the range of the *Huascar’s* guns. Every weapon was thereupon trained astern, and the accuracy of the little gunboat’s fire was soon apparent, for on board the corvette one of the forward 100-pounders was dismounted and silenced, several Nordenfeldts were damaged and put out of action, and a luckily placed solid shot struck the *Union’s* foremast full upon the cap, wrecking it and bringing the upper spars down, with disastrous effect to the men on deck below.

Indeed it began to look as though the plucky little ship would escape after all, for she was now beyond range of all but the *Huascar’s* heaviest guns, while the *Union* had been obliged to slacken speed considerably in order to enable her to get her wreckage cleared away. But Condell surmised that the Peruvians must have shrewdly

guessed at his destination, and he knew that they would not give up the chase so long as there was a chance of getting him again under their guns. Moreover, he had still nearly three hundred and fifty miles to go before he could reach safety,—more than a day and a half's steaming!

The *Covadonga* very soon ran the *Huascar* hull-down, and had left the corvette about five miles astern before the latter got the wreckage of her foremast cleared away and resumed her pursuit at full speed; but Condell had improved the shining hour by putting his own little ship to rights, and getting up more powder and shell in readiness for the renewed attack which he knew must come.

Day had just begun to dawn when the *Union* again opened fire, and her first shell unluckily cut the tiller chains on board the gunboat, so that the *Covadonga* very nearly ran up on the beach before the chain could be repaired and the ship again got under control; indeed, Jim distinctly felt her keel scrape as she ran over a shoal which stretched out about half a mile into the sea. By the greatest good fortune, however, she got clear, and again resumed her attempt at escape. But the Peruvian ship had by this time lessened her distance to about two miles, and was firing so accurately that nearly every shot came aboard Condell's little ship, which, however, still continued to reply pluckily, and with such precision that she did a considerable amount of damage to the *Union*.

Then suddenly it seemed as though the end had come, for a particularly well-aimed shell came hurtling into the *Covadonga*, close to her rudder-post, almost entirely destroying the rudder, and smashing one of the blades clean off the propeller. As a consequence, her speed immediately dropped to about five knots, and Condell ground his teeth with rage. If they could but have held out a little longer

all might have been well, and he might have escaped into one of the shallow bays abounding on the coast where there was too little water for his heavily armed enemy to follow. He felt that it was cruelly hard. But the brave skipper was not yet beaten ; far from it. He was determined to fight to the bitter end and, if need be, go down with his colours flying and guns firing, as did his friend and brother officer, Arturo Prat, on board the *Huascar* at the battle of Iquique Bay, in which he, Condell, also took part. Surrender? No ; perish the thought !

“Two columns of smoke approaching from the south-west, sir,” suddenly reported Douglas, who had been attentively gazing southward through the slit in the conning-tower, “and we are raising them so fast that they must be steaming hard, whoever they may be. Is it possible, I wonder, that they are two of our ships brought up by the firing?”

“Where, Señor Douglas? Allow me to look!” ejaculated Condell excitedly. “By all that’s wonderful, if you are right it means that we are saved! Be so good as to bring me my glass, young man, as quickly as possible. Every moment is now very precious.”

Douglas was back in less than a minute, carrying the telescope, by the aid of which it was presently seen that the approaching steamers were undoubtedly warships ; one of them having very much the appearance of the *Magellanes*, while the other, a corvette, might be either the *O’Higgins* or the *Chacabuco*.

Condell looked long at the approaching ships, and then turned to look at the *Union*. The Peruvian was fast coming up astern, and could not now be more than a mile away. She was still firing remorselessly into the gunboat, and apparently had not noticed the smoke columns.

“Now,” shouted Condell to his men, “there is the *Union*, and yonder are two of our ships coming up. We will stand and fight where we are, for we can no longer run; and we must endeavour to disable the Peruvian so effectually that she will fall an easy prey to the Chilean ships. When once we get to close grips we must keep her so busy that she will not have time to look round her until our friends are close aboard, when we will hand her over to their tender mercies! To quarters again, my brave hearts, and may God defend the right!”

A rousing cheer answered his words, and the men returned to their guns full of hope and with renewed energy. They opened such a furious fire upon the Peruvian that she fairly reeled under the impact of that storm of missiles. But she nevertheless came on, unchecked, and a few minutes later ranged up, broadside on to the *Covadonga*, at a distance of about seven hundred yards, when the action at once became close and fierce.

In less than a minute the Chilean gunboat had her mizzen-mast shot away close to the deck, her funnel riddled by machine-gun bullets, and every man not under cover killed. But the survivors sheltered themselves behind the gun-shields, and manfully replied with every weapon still capable of firing. The *Union* lost her captain and first lieutenant during the first few minutes of the renewed encounter, her mainmast came down by the board, having been struck, fair and square, by one of the *Covadonga's* 70-pounder shells, and all her small boats were in a few minutes utterly destroyed by the storm of shot from the gunboat's gatling-guns.

Then, suddenly, the *Covadonga* observed a wild commotion on board the *Union*, and her screw began to revolve once more, while columns of black smoke pouring out of

her shot-torn funnel showed that there was a considerable amount of activity in her engine-room. Then she began to forge ahead and, turning slowly to starboard, headed away to the north. She had caught sight of the approaching Chilian craft, and meant to effect her escape while the way still lay open to her.

Jim saw a man run aft and dip the Peruvian ensign three times in a mock farewell salute, while the white water began to boil out from under the *Union's* stern. She was in full retreat, firing with her stern guns as she went. But Condell had no intention of permitting her to escape so easily. His ship would still steer, after a fashion, if she was not driven too hard, and he immediately took up a slow pursuit, hoping against hope that he might still be able to plump a lucky shell into her which should destroy either rudder or propeller, and so leave her at the mercy of the new arrivals, which were rapidly coming up, and which could now be plainly made out as being the *Magellanes*, gunboat, and the *Chacabuco*, corvette.

The Peruvian was going away fast enough, however, to take her soon out of range of the *Covadonga*. But the *Magellanes* and *Chacabuco*, as they rushed past the gunboat cheering, now began to fire at the flying ship, and several of their shells burst aboard her. As the *Chacabuco* passed she made the signal "Proceed forthwith to Valparaiso, and report that I am chasing to the northward. Good luck and congratulations." The two ships swept rapidly away in chase of the Peruvian, and the *Covadonga*, obeying orders and resuming her voyage, made the best of her way to Valparaiso, which she reached the following evening, dropping her anchor in the middle of the assembled Chilian fleet, to the accompaniment of rousing cheers for her gallant conduct at Iquique Bay and Punto Gruesos.

Jim then bade good-bye to Captain Condell and returned to his own ship, the *Blanco Encalada*, where he was most enthusiastically received by all his friends, an especially warm welcome being extended to him by his chum Terry O'Meara.

CHAPTER VIII

Mine and Countermine

JIM found, upon rejoining the *Blanco Encalada*, that there was great excitement prevailing aboard that ship; for the fleet had received orders to sail, that very day, for the port of Arica, and the squadron was only waiting for Commodore Riveros, who had superseded Rebolledo Williams, to come aboard to start.

There were numerous rumours flying about the *Blanco* as to the object of the cruise northward; but the one which obtained most credence was to the effect that the Chilean fleet had been instructed to find and destroy the *Huascar*, *Union*, and *Pilcomayo*, which were waging a destructive war against the Chilean commerce, and which, it was very strongly suspected, had been guilty of certain acts against Chilean and other craft which more nearly resembled piracy than civilised warfare. So much damage, indeed, had been wrought by them that the Chilean Government had decided to hunt down the obnoxious craft; and for this purpose there were now assembled in Valparaiso harbour the *Almirante Cochrane* and *Blanco Encalada*, both battleships, the corvette *O'Higgins*, and the armed merchant-steamers *Loa* and *Mathias Cousiño*. The little gunboat *Covadonga* had also been intended to sail with the squadron,

but, as has been seen, she had been too badly damaged in her gallant fight with the Peruvian vessels to permit of her doing so.

Mid-day came, but it brought no sign of the commodore ; and it was three o'clock in the afternoon before his launch was seen to steam away from the naval steps at the jetty. The side was then piped, and Riveros came on board, to the accompaniment of the flagship's band and a crashing salute from the other vessels in the harbour. Upon his arrival on board he immediately went below to his cabin and sent for his captain, with whom he was in close conference for about an hour. Apparently he informed him as to the plan of campaign, for soon after Captain Castello came on deck it became known, all over the ship, that a telegram had been received from a Chilean spy in Arica to the effect that the *Huascar* and the *Union* were to call in at that port in about three days' time, and that they would be detained there for about a week in order to effect certain repairs. Therefore, should the Chileans sail immediately, suggested the telegram, they would be almost certain to catch their prey without difficulty. It was also within the bounds of possibility that the *Pilcomayo* and *Manco Capac* might likewise be there; and in that case, since the opposing forces would be pretty evenly matched, there was every prospect of a general engagement being fought, a prospect which aroused the keenest enthusiasm of every man in the fleet, and more especially that of such young hot-bloods as Jim and his friend O'Meara, to say nothing of Lieutenant Montt, who was being transferred, to his great gratification, from the *Covadonga* to the *Blanco Encalada*.

A few minutes after Captain Castello had come on deck the bugles shrilled out, "Clear lower deck. Hands up anchor!" and the seamen came tumbling up from below,

happy and eager as a parcel of schoolboys off for a holiday. A string of signal-flags soared aloft to the *Blanco's* main-yard-arm, and half an hour later her screw began to revolve as she led the way out of the harbour, with the other ships following, in column of line ahead.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon of October 1, 1879, and the cruise had begun which was to prove so eventful for at least two of the ships comprising the squadron. As they passed out to sea with ever-increasing speed the forts on either side of the bay fired a farewell salute; and the spectacle of the sun sinking over Monte Bajo and the Centinela Alto, coupled with the lurid flashes of flame and clouds of white smoke from Forts San Antonio, Buera, Valdivia, and the Citadel, constituted a picture the grandeur of which Jim never forgot.

A very careful look-out was maintained during the progress of the fleet up the coast, and Commodore Riveros took the precaution to look into Chañeral Bay, Cobija, and Iquique, to make quite sure that the Peruvians—who might possibly have got wind of the expedition—should have no chance of escaping by lying hidden until the Chilians were past, and then making a sudden dash southward upon the comparatively defenceless ports of the lower coast.

There was, however, no sign of the enemy anywhere in any of these places, and all the news that Riveros was able to pick up tended to confirm the telegram which he had received at Valparaiso, to the effect that the Peruvians would certainly be found at Arica. Having, therefore, made certain that they had left no enemy in their rear, the Chilians steamed away from Iquique on the 3rd of October, and arrived at a point ten miles to the south of Arica at three o'clock the next morning, where the fleet hove to, in

order to allow of a council of war being held by the commodore and captains in the cabin of the *Blanco Encalada*.

The captains of the *Cochrane* and the *O'Higgins* were in favour of an attack by the whole squadron upon the Peruvian fleet supposed to be lying in the harbour, but the commodore, with the captains of the *Loa* and *Mathias Cousiño*, opposed that plan, on the grounds that the harbour was very strongly defended by forts ; consequently, if such an attack were carried out the Chileans would be obliged to silence the batteries before they could turn their attention to the Peruvian ironclads. The scheme favoured by Riveros, and which was ultimately carried out, was to send in a number of steam launches from the ships, each armed with a couple of spar-torpedoes, and try to blow up the Peruvian ships. The commodore's argument was that they would almost certainly be successful, if the attack were properly made ; while, if it were to fail, the Peruvians would be certain to come out of port in pursuit of the torpedo-boats, and find themselves face to face with the Chilean fleet, and beyond the protection of the shore batteries.

This having been decided upon, the captains returned to their ships, and the squadron once more headed northward, at a speed of about five knots, finally coming to an anchor some four miles away from Arica, but completely hidden from it by the headland of Santa Catharina, which forms the southern extremity of the bay. The steam-launches of the *Almirante Cochrane* and the *Blanco Encalada* were then lowered into the water, together with a small Hereschoff torpedo-boat which the *O'Higgins* had brought up on her deck. These little craft all rendezvoused at the flagship, and spar-torpedoes were hastily fitted to all three, one projecting from the bow of each boat. As the expedition was likely to be an extremely hazardous one, Commodore

Riveros decided to call for volunteers to man the torpedo-boats; and Jim Douglas and Jorge Montt were the first two officers who presented themselves for the service, while Terry O'Meara asked to be allowed to accompany his chum, should the latter be accepted, to take charge of the engines of the boat in which Jim was to go.

At length the commodore decided to send Jim in charge of the *Blanco's* torpedo-boat, with Terry O'Meara in charge of the engines. Montt was to take command of the *Cochrane's* launch; and a man named Juarez was given the command of the Hereschoff torpedo-boat, which was a craft of about sixteen tons displacement. Jim, as being second lieutenant of the flagship, was given the command of the little squadron; and, after half an hour's interview with the commodore, during which he received the most minute instructions as to how he was to proceed, he went over the *Blanco Encalada's* side into her steam-launch, and gave the signal to start.

There was no cheering at their departure, for all those who were left behind felt that they might never see their comrades again; moreover, it was necessary to maintain the strictest silence, since, the night being very still, sounds would carry to an immense distance over the water. If suspicion were once aroused on shore, it would mean the absolute annihilation of the brave fellows who had started on their desperate errand. The fleet, of course, showed no lights, and neither did the three torpedo-boats; consequently, within a minute after the latter had started the darkness swallowed them up completely, and there was no telling whereabouts they were, or what progress they were making.

Jim had, however, most carefully taken his bearings before leaving the flagship, and, by the help of the chart

and compass, knew exactly where to find the fleet again when his perilous mission had been accomplished. He steamed along northward over the three or four miles which separated him from Arica in extended column of line abreast, so that the chances of detection should be as much reduced as possible, and so that they could pick up any small craft which might perchance be cruising about in the neighbourhood; and he had already arranged a simple code of signals, whereby the three small steamers might communicate with one another without attracting undue attention to themselves.

Half an hour after pushing off from the *Blanco Encalada*, the flotilla came abreast of the southern extremity of Santa Catharina island, and Jim knew that in another five minutes he would obtain a full view of the harbour, when he would also know whether his intended prey lay in the roads or not. The heart of every man in the little flotilla beat fast, and his breath came thickly under the stress of the intense excitement of the moment; and Jim, from his position in the stern of the *Blanco's* launch, tried to pierce the darkness with his eyes to get the first glimpse of the Peruvian vessels.

A moment later the three boats, closer together now, swept round the northern end of the island, and Arica roadstead lay in full view before them.

It was now the hour before the dawn, and consequently the night was at its darkest, but Jim could hardly repress a cry of delight as he caught sight of four indistinct, dark masses, looming up on the surface of the bay. There were no lights showing anywhere, save in one or two isolated houses on shore, where sickness probably kept the inmates awake; but he had not expected to find any lights showing among the Peruvian fleet, since they would

naturally desire to keep their whereabouts hidden from chance Chilean prowlers. But in Jim's mind there was no doubt that the four shapeless blurs lying close together, about half a mile away, were the vessels of which he had come in search; and he passed the word to the other launches to select each her own particular vessel, torpedo her, and then steam away back to the Chilean fleet. He himself intended to be responsible for two of the Peruvians, while his consorts were instructed to take one a-piece. No conditions, he thought to himself, could have been more favourable to the enterprise. So far as he could make out, no suspicion had been aroused that the Chileans were in the vicinity; the night was dark, and the town seemed to be asleep. In fact, their enemies appeared to be indulging in a feeling of security from which they would awake—too late!

The order was now passed for the launches to ease down to half-speed, so that the sound of the churning propellers might be less perceptible, and the three boats crept forward almost in complete silence upon their prey. Jim could now plainly make out the brig-rig of the monitor *Huascar*, and the three masts and single funnel of the corvette *Union*, and these two ships he intended to account for with his own torpedo-boat. Away to the right, close under the forts, and about four hundred yards from the *Huascar*, lay what looked like a couple of other monitors. He had quite expected, or at least hoped, to find one other monitor there, the *Manco Capac*, but not a third; for, according to the information received, the fourth ship should have been the *Pilcomayo* gunboat. But, no matter; it would be as easy to blow up an ironclad monitor as a gunboat; and Jim ordered each of the other two torpedo-boats to select one of the monitors lying under the

forts, while he himself steamed toward the vessels which he took to be the *Huascar* and the *Union*.

After waiting about five minutes, to allow of the other two launches getting close to their objectives, Jim inquired in a low tone if all was in readiness; and upon being informed that everything was prepared, called in a whisper to Terry O'Meara, "Full speed ahead, and give her every ounce of steam she can carry!"

In response to this command the little steamer's propeller suddenly started to revolve at a tremendous rate under the pressure of steam which Terry let into the cylinders; her stern dipped several inches deeper into the water, and with a rippling noise like that of tearing silk at her bows, she darted toward the nearest ship, which Douglas took to be the *Huascar*, and which could not have been more than five hundred yards away.

Nearer and nearer they rushed, the men in the bows craning their necks eagerly forward to see where the torpedo would strike, and Jim, in the stern, crouching over the tiller and holding his boat's bows fair and square for the middle of his prey. It occurred to him, for a moment, as being rather curious that even now he could detect no signs of life aboard either of the Peruvian ships, for he had fully calculated on the launches being seen and an alarm raised ere he had approached so close. But no suspicion entered his mind, and he thanked his lucky stars that he had been fortunate enough to catch the enemy totally unprepared. It would make his task so much the easier.

Now the little steamer was quite close to the Peruvian monitor, and in a few seconds more the blow would be struck which would send a warship and her entire crew to the bottom. Oh, the fools! he thought to himself, not to take more care of their ship. They were doomed; nothing

could now save them ; success was within his grasp. Five seconds more—then three—then two. Now the spar with its deadly torpedo was almost touching the *Huascar's* side——

Crash !

A rending sound of ripping and tearing timber and another awful crash came immediately afterward, and every man in the *Blanco Encalada's* launch was hurled off his feet, and thrown either into the bottom of the boat or overboard, while the little steamer's bows rose bodily out of the water until her keel reached an angle of almost forty-five degrees, and there she stuck, still quivering in every timber from the shock.

In a second Jim realised the terrible truth. By some means or other the Peruvians had got wind of the intended attack, and had placed a stout boom of timber all round the ship, and it was upon this obstacle that the Chilean launch had charged at full speed, running right up on to it with the force of the blow, and remaining there immovable and almost a wreck.

Jim's first thought was of how to warn the people in the other two launches, for if the enemy had been prepared for attack in one quarter, he would certainly have taken the same precautions in the other. Ah, yes ! There were several blue rockets in a locker in the stern-sheets ; these would serve to show that something had gone wrong, and might perhaps save the others from a similar mishap.

Jim scrambled out of his seat and was just raising the locker lid when a long streak of flame burst from the *Huascar's* side. There was a deafening, thudding roar, and a stream of machine-gun bullets screeched and hummed over their heads. They had indeed walked right into a cunningly contrived trap, and the Peruvians had been on the watch for them the whole time.

The next minute there was a dull roar away to starboard, and Jim saw, out of the corner of his eye, a huge column of water leap up, with something dark poised upon the top of it. In a second he realised that one at least of his consorts had been successful and had torpedoed her prey; but even before the column of water had subsided, there broke out a crash of musketry aboard the second monitor, and sparks of fire sprang up in different parts of her, which quickly brightened into a lurid glare and showed that her people were lighting beacon-fires, the better to see who their attackers might be and their whereabouts.

Truly it was the Chileans who had been taken by surprise, not their enemies! And what a mess they had made of it all, too!

But there was no time now to think about the other launches; they would have to look after themselves; for Jim's whole energies were now directed toward the saving of his own boat's crew. After the first volley of machine-gun fire from the ship which he had attacked, the Peruvians got their aim right, and sent a perfect hail of Gatling, Nordenfeldt, and rifle bullets hurtling into the wrecked launch, so that her men began to fall in all directions. Beacon-fires were also lighted in bow and stern and at amidships, so that the vivid red glare shed a lurid radiance over everything within a hundred yards. And by their light Douglas saw that the ship which he had attacked was *not* the *Huascar* at all; neither was the craft lying close to her the *Union*! They were a pair of old hulks, roughly metamorphosed so as to resemble the warships, and heavy barriers of floating timber had been thrown out all round them, while they had been armed with machine-guns and crowds of riflemen. The monitor and the corvette had escaped out of Arica harbour to continue their depredations

elsewhere, and the *Pilcomayo* had probably gone with them. The Chilians had walked into a cleverly set trap and were paying dearly for their mistake.

Jim quickly recovered his presence of mind, and springing out of the launch while the bullets whistled about his ears, started to examine the boat in order to ascertain whether she were still seaworthy. He soon discovered that although there were numerous holes in her planking, they were all above the water-line, as luck would have it, and although a long piece of her keel was gone, it had not started the boat's timbers so far as he could see.

"Now, boys," he shouted, "if we can get the launch back into the water we may escape after all. Who will lend me a hand?"

The men needed no second bidding, but sprang to their young leader's assistance, and worked with all the energy of despair. Man after man fell under the deadly hail of fire from the hulk, but as fast as they fell others took their places, until at last, under their furious exertions, the little steamer began to quiver, and then moved slightly backward off the boom. There was an ominous cracking of timber for a few seconds, as some part of her splintered planking caught in the obstruction, and then, with a rending, tearing noise, it gave way, and the launch slid into the water of the bay, shipping a ton or two of it over her stern as she splashed in. But she was afloat once more, and could she only come unscathed through that inferno of bullets, the few remaining members of her crew might, even yet, hope to escape at last.

"Into the boat with you," cried Jim; "into the boat, all but four men. You, Terry, get to your engines, and give me all the steam you can, while the others bale the boat clear of all that water. Now, you four men," he went on,

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“I am going to ask you to help me in a very dangerous task. I am not going to leave this ship with my duty unfinished. I intend to torpedo her, at all hazards! Cut loose that spar at once, and we will place it along the boom in such a way that the torpedo touches this ship’s side. I will then cut a short length of fuse, and attach it to the explosive, so that it will burn for about a minute. That will just give us time to get out of reach before the powder blows up, and will not leave the Peruvians sufficient to displace the torpedo. Now then, grapple hold of the spar, you four men, and stand by to push all together when I give the word. Be ready, Terry, my boy, to go ahead with your engines directly we scramble on board, for a second’s delay may mean that we shall all be blown to smithereens. Give me that piece of fuse, Carlos. There, that has fixed that up,” continued Douglas, as he cut and placed the slow match in the opening provided for it. “Now then, all together—lift!”

As Jim gave the word the men gripped the spar, lifted it, and pushed it forward until the pointed barrel-like apparatus at its further extremity touched the ship’s side. The Peruvians up above were by this time aware of what the Chilians contemplated, and turned all their attention to the men engaged upon the dangerous task of fixing the spar, thus giving those in the launch a welcome respite.

But owing to the hulk’s high bulwarks and her great amount of “sheer,” they could not fire directly into Jim’s party, and the bullets plugged harmlessly into the boom about a yard behind the Chilians. Jim then ordered the men to place all their weight upon the spar, and this having been done, he clambered nimbly along it until he came to the torpedo. Then he rearranged the fuse, struck a match and applied it.

There immediately began a violent splutter of sparks, accompanied by a fizzing noise, and Jim knew that no power on earth could now avert the imminent explosion. Like a cat he worked his way backwards along the spar, which bent and heaved under his weight, until presently he stood once more upon the beam.

“Now, there’s no time to waste,” gasped Douglas, as the five men stood in the shelter of the hulk’s tall sides. “We must make a rush all together, and trust to getting aboard the launch unhit. But if any of us are wounded, the wounded must remain where they are ; for any attempt at rescue will mean the death of us all. Now then—GO !”

As one man the five brave fellows sprang forward, hoping to reach the launch before the Peruvians were ready for them. But the latter were on the look-out, and as the men left their shelter, rifles and machine-guns cracked and roared once more. Two men fell, literally riddled with shot, but the others scrambled aboard the launch, and Jim gasped out, “Go ahead, Terry !” not a moment too soon.

The launch had not got more than fifty yards away when there was an appalling explosion, and the whole side of the hulk seemed to fall bodily inward. She heeled over, and almost instantly plunged into the depths of the bay, the waters of which at once closed over her, dragging down the living and the dead, in the fearful vortex which she created.

Jim then sent up a blue rocket to call the other boats away, for it was hopeless to attempt anything farther that night, and half an hour later he was rejoined, just as day was dawning, by the *Almirante Cochrane’s* launch, which was almost in a worse state than his own. She brought word that the two monitors had been the *Manco Capac* and *Atahualpa*, and that the Hereschoff torpedo-boat, under Juarez, had blown up the latter, but had herself been

destroyed by the *Manco Capac*. Three men only had been rescued from her crew, and these were on board the *Cochrane's* boat, which had herself lost nearly three-quarters of her men. Taking it all round, however, the attacking force had not done so badly, having destroyed a two thousand-ton ironclad and sunk a hulk full of men and guns, with a loss of one small torpedo-boat, and seventeen men killed.

Jim then gave orders for the wounded to be made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, and the two launches continued their journey back to the fleet, which was reached about eight o'clock. The young man immediately made his report to the commodore, and the latter, who seemed to have no mind of his own, then called another council of officers to decide whether they should enter the bay and destroy the *Manco Capac* and the forts, or whether they should take up the pursuit of the other three Peruvian warships which had eluded them in so mysterious a way.

It was unanimously decided to pursue, so as to prevent them from doing any further damage; and Riveros therefore divided his squadron into two parts, consisting of the *Almirante Cochrane* and *Blanco Encalada* in one division; and the *O'Higgins*, *Loa*, and *Mathias Cousiño* in the other. One column, consisting of the three latter vessels, was to steam a hundred miles due westward, and then head south, while the admiral would proceed in the same direction, but would keep close in along the coast.

These arrangements having been made, the captains returned to their respective ships, the anchors were raised, and the fleet separated into two divisions—one going south direct, and the other going west in the first instance.

CHAPTER IX

The Battle of Angamos

ALTHOUGH somewhat disappointed at their failure to find the Peruvian fleet lying in Arica Bay, the men on board the *Blanco Encalada* looked forward, with all the pleasure of anticipation, to the time when they should overtake the marauding warships, bring them to action, and destroy them. And Commodore Riveros' offer of a hundred *pésos* to the man who should first sight the enemy, only increased the anxiety of the flagship's crew to fever-heat, and men were to be found aloft upon the look-out at all hours of the day and night. It had been made known, too, that Captain Latorre, who had been promoted to the *Almirante Cochrane*, had also offered a similar reward; and every man aboard the *Blanco* made up his mind that *his* ship should have the honour of bringing the Peruvians to action.

Leaving Arica on the 4th of October, the inshore squadron, with the flagship leading the way, steamed slowly down the coast, exploring every nook and cranny where the enemy might by any possibility be lurking—for it was evident that they must have been hiding somewhere when the Chilians had steamed northward a few days before. But no sign of an enemy was seen during that day, nor during the next,

and on the 6th the fleet steamed into the harbour of Mejillones de Bolivia, in order to coal.

Commodore Riveros, bearing in mind his own attempt on the Peruvians at Arica, and feeling convinced that their fleet must be somewhere close at hand, gave the strictest orders that no men should be allowed to go ashore, and that a patrol of steam-launches should ply up and down the harbour the whole night through, in order to prevent the attempt of similar tactics on the part of the enemy. He had also seen fit to express approval of the manner in which Jim Douglas had carried out the task assigned to him in Arica Bay, and he therefore sent for him to his cabin and informed the young man that he was to take command, in the *Blanco Encalada's* launch, of the flotilla which was to do patrol-duty during the night—a circumstance which afforded Jim the utmost satisfaction, and emboldened him to ask as a favour that Terry O'Meara should again be allowed to accompany him; to which request Riveros immediately acceded.

Night came on with no sign of the enemy; but as Mejillones was in Bolivia, and had only very recently been occupied by the Chileans, the danger was almost as likely to come from the direction of the shore as from the sea, as the port was full of Bolivian and Peruvian refugees who would stop at nothing to effect the destruction of part of the Chilean fleet.

As soon as the dusk began to fall, the launches of the two ironclads were hoisted out, their crews picked, and at half-past six Jim and his friend Terry took their places in the flagship's boat, which steamed off slowly in one direction round the harbour, while that of the *Almirante Cochrane* started, under easy steam, in the opposite direction. Both launches were provided with a Gatling gun in the bows, and

their crews were armed with rifles and revolvers, and orders had been given that any strange craft upon failing to answer a challenge should be fired into immediately.

It occupied the launches about an hour, running under easy steam, to circumnavigate Mejillones harbour, and Jim's boat had already made her round five or six times without any suspicious circumstance occurring, and he himself was beginning to feel very tired and sleepy, when about a mile and a half away, at the northern extremity of the bay, he fancied he saw a spark of light flare up for a moment and then go out suddenly, as though hastily quenched.

He was broad awake immediately, with every sense on the alert, and he strained his eyes into the darkness—for there was only a very thin crescent moon shining—in order to try to make out where the light had come from and what had caused it.

"Terry," he whispered to his chum, who was sitting drowsily over the little engines, with the starting lever loosely clutched in his hand, "did you catch sight of a glimmer of light away there to the northward just now?"

"Light? No; I saw no light," replied Terry, suddenly pulling himself together. "Did you? Whereabouts was it, old boy? This continual going round and round has become rather monotonous, and I am afraid that I was very nearly asleep."

"Well, it was over in that direction," explained Douglas, pointing, "and it looked as though some one had suddenly opened the slide of a dark lantern, and as quickly closed it again. However, it *may*, of course, only have been my fancy—for I, like you, have been frightfully sleepy for the last two hours; and in any case it could hardly have been an enemy, for the light was quite two miles away from the ironclads. No, I must have been—— Hallo! though,

there is the light again, and, by jingo ! how quickly it is travelling over the water, too. Here, Terry, man, wake up ! There is something amiss, after all. Go full speed ahead, for all you are worth. That light is heading straight for the *Blanco Encalada*, and if it should be an enemy's boat which is carrying it we shall have all our work cut out to intercept her before she reaches the flagship. I wonder whereabouts the *Cochrane's* launch is. She would be of great assistance to us now. Get every knot you can out of your engines, old man, for I fear foul play."

Terry O'Meara needed no second bidding, for he also had caught sight of the swiftly moving point of light, and the circumstance reminded him very forcibly of their own attempt to torpedo the Peruvian fleet lying in Arica Bay. He pushed over his regulator to its top notch, and started the weary stokers to the task of shovelling on coal with all possible dispatch. The tiny screw revolved faster and faster, churning and frothing the water up astern, and the launch darted away like a greyhound slipped from the leash. The seamen handled their rifles and revolvers, to make sure that they were loaded, opening and closing the breaches with a smart click, while the men in charge of the Gatling gun moved up forward, close to their weapon, and trained it up and down, and from side to side, to assure themselves that the mechanism was in perfect working order.

For a few seconds Douglas's heart seemed to stand still with anxiety, for it appeared as though the launch would not be able to intercept the rapidly moving spark of light—which he was now convinced belonged to a torpedo-boat—before it reached the *Blanco Encalada*, for which ship the boat was undoubtedly heading. But little by little, as soon as the engines got into their swing, the launch drew ahead,

and after about ten minutes' steaming Jim saw that he would, all being well, cross the stranger's bows before she reached the flagship.

The launch was showing no lights, and the torpedo-boat—if such she was—was still too far away for a hail to reach her. Jim was therefore in hopes of taking her by surprise, and ordered the men to maintain perfect silence, but to be ready to open fire directly he gave the word.

Closer and closer the two converging craft swept toward each other, until barely a quarter of a mile separated them, and then, just at the critical moment, when Jim was about to shout his challenge across the water, an accident happened which had well-nigh proved disastrous for the Chilians. A seaman who had remained behind in the cockpit was ordered to go forward and join the crew of the Gatling gun, which it was now discovered was one man short, and in clambering along the narrow strip of deck which ran round the little steamer the man stumbled and dropped his rifle. Unluckily, the weapon fell muzzle downward, and the fixed bayonet dropped edgewise into the tiny crank-pit. There was a sudden shock and a noise of cracking metal, and the screw ceased revolving with a jerk that shook the launch from stem to stern, while her way, of course, fell off immediately.

“*Caramba!*” ejaculated Jim, keeping one eye fixed upon the spark of light which was now rapidly travelling past them, “if we can't put that machinery right in two minutes, then—good-bye to the *Blanco!* Quick, Terry, is there any hope, do you think?” he asked, dropping on one knee beside his chum, who had already shut off steam and was crouching over the machinery.

“Wait a bit, Jim,” replied Terry, working away like a madman with spanner and screw-wrench; “if I can but

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loosen this nut I can disconnect this bent rod and replace it in half a jiffy."

The young man heaved and strained at the spanner, with the perspiration dripping off his forehead, but he could not get the refractory nut to turn. The stout steel handle quivered under the strain, and Terry's muscles stood out on his bare arms like whipcord, but still the nut would not budge. In a second Jim threw his strength into the balance; the spanner showed signs of slipping round the nut, but the next second it flew round, and the nut gave at last.

It was then only a few seconds' work to take out the bent rod and replace it with a new one; but the suspected torpedo-boat had by that time drawn ahead of the launch. Jim, however, was not the sort of man to say "die," and at his quick word of command the boat leaped forward once more after the enemy, and under the increased pressure of steam due to the stoppage, actually began to gain upon the chase. Douglas put his hands to his mouth and sent a sharp challenge ringing across the water toward her. This was immediately followed by a slight commotion aboard the suspected Peruvian, which showed that the hail had been heard; but there was no sign of her stopping; indeed, the next second a strong volume of flame gushed up from her funnel, which proved that her engineers had shovelled on more coal and turned on the forced draught.

Jim almost groaned in his agony of mind, for it seemed as though the accident to the launch had doomed the flagship to destruction, and he was just about to order his men to fire the Gatling gun at the dimly seen shape, in the hope of hitting her, despite the fact that the smoke would hide the chase from him, when he saw a long steel-coloured shape glide past the bows of his own boat.

His heart gave a great thump at the sight, for he knew that he had had a narrow escape from death. The torpedo-boat was not carrying a spar torpedo, but was towing the infernal machine, which she doubtless meant to drag under the flagship's bows. It was one of the newly invented Lay torpedoes, and a terrible weapon when effectively used. But alarm at his own narrow escape was swamped in the feeling of relief for the safety of the *Blanco Encalada*; for the torpedo-boat would be obliged to manœuvre a little to get her torpedo into place, and thus there was just a chance that he might yet be able to intercept her. In a second he had whirled the wheel hard over and was off along the Peruvian's wake, telling the men to keep a bright look-out for the torpedo, and to commence firing in the direction of the torpedo-boat.

Then the quick, metallic clatter of the Gatling broke out, mingled with the whip-like crack of the rifles, and the darkness was illuminated by the vivid flashes of flame. From the Peruvian a series of hoarse screams, oaths, and yells told plainly enough that the Chilians had made good practice, and that some at least of the hailing bullets had found their billets; but the craft was all too surely drawing away, and it became a question whether, even now, the launch would be in time to save the *Blanco Encalada*.

Suddenly Jim perceived a speck of fire break out aboard the flagship, which quickly broke into a great glow of flame, and he heaved a sigh of relief which was almost a sob, for he knew that her people had taken alarm from the firing and were prepared. In a few seconds the beacon-fire spread a lurid glare wide over the waters of the bay, and the Peruvian torpedo-boat was plainly disclosed to view, together with a phosphorescent glimmer which indicated the position of the deadly torpedo.

“Now, men!” cried the young Englishman, “now is your chance, while the light lasts. Train the gun on the torpedo, and fire at it until you hit it. Riflemen, do the same, and remember that the *Blanco*’s safety depends upon your shooting.”

“Ay, ay, sir!” responded the Chileans, and a second later the Gatling in the bows began to chatter out its deadly message, while the seamen rapidly loaded and fired their rifles, in the hope of destroying the infernal machine before it could reach the *Blanco Encalada*. But, try as they might, it seemed impossible to hit that fish-like object which dashed through the water ahead of them. Twice the Chileans had hit the torpedo-boat’s helmsman, and twice he had been replaced, while the shrieks that came from the boat itself testified to the execution inflicted upon her crew. Still she was creeping nearer and nearer to the flagship, the crew of which were vainly trying to depress the muzzles of their great guns sufficiently to reach the Peruvian, and but a few more short seconds were needed for the latter to complete her fell work.

Then, all in a moment, the end came. Jim did not know how it happened, whether it was due to his own men, or to those on board the flagship; but a bullet struck the torpedo fair and square. The next instant there was a stunning concussion, and the water between pursuer and pursued seemed to be blown into a great hollow sphere, the sides of which then rushed together again, while a tall column of water heaped itself up fully thirty feet into the air, to collapse into spray which drenched to the skin every man both in the torpedo-boat and in the launch.

A wild cheer broke out on board the Chilean launch and the *Blanco Encalada*, and their men now turned all their attention to destroy the wasp which had just been de-

prived of its sting. The moment that her towed torpedo had exploded she was practically powerless for injury, and she turned her nose seaward at once, hoping, by a desperate rush, to get clear away. And so she doubtless would, had it not been for the launch belonging to the *Almirante Cochrane*.

This craft had, like Jim's boat, several times made the circuit of the bay; and she was away down at the south end of the harbour when her lieutenant in charge first heard the sounds of firing. He immediately guessed the cause and, putting his engines at full speed, raced along toward the spot where he could see the rifles flashing, and before he had gone very far he had the *Blanco Encalada's* beacon-fire to help him.

As the launch came rushing along toward her consort, Jim blew his steam-whistle three times to attract her attention, and he was only just in the nick of time, for the Peruvian would have been in front of the *Cochrane's* launch in another half-minute. But like a hawk upon its prey the *Cochrane's* boat dashed forward, her commander determining to hazard all in one stroke, instead of using his guns. He aimed straight for a point which the torpedo-boat must pass in a few seconds, and went ahead full speed.

The impact was so violent that the Peruvian torpedo-boat collapsed like an eggshell, the *Cochrane's* launch driving right over the wreck without doing herself any very serious injury. The torpedo-boat's boilers exploded as she sank, and probably killed every remaining man among her crew, for not a single living being was to be found when the Chilians proceeded to search for the survivors.

This exciting little episode over, Jim and his consort resumed their patrol of the harbour until daylight, when their long and trying vigil ceased. The ships finished coaling

by five o'clock in the afternoon of the new day, and immediately stood out to sea, much to Douglas's relief, for he felt that another night like the last would have been too much for him. Once outside the harbour, the two ironclads turned their heads to the south again; and Riveros made the signal that Antofagasta was to be their next port of call.

It was 3.30 A.M. on the 8th of October when Jim was awakened by a stentorian cry from the deck of "Two ships ahead!" Galvanised into alertness he listened intently, and heard the officer of the watch calmly reply, "Where away?"

There was a short pause, and then the seaman answered, "Three points on our port bow. They are hull-down; but there are two columns of smoke approaching at a great speed from the south-east. They are about twelve miles away and, so far as I can make out, are just abreast of Point Angamos."

Jim did not wait to hear the reply of "Very good. Keep your eye on the smoke, and report any further developments," but jumped into his clothes and hurried up on deck just in time to hear the bugles call "Hands on deck. Clear ship for action." It was quite evident that the smoke could not be coming from the second Chilean division; for, in that case, there would have been three columns of smoke instead of two. Therefore the strangers could scarcely be other than the long-sought-for Peruvian ships the *Huascar* and the *Union*.

A few seconds after the bugle had sounded the men came tumbling up on deck, full of excitement at the idea of a fight; and with many a jovial laugh and jest they hurried away to their quarters. Jim made the rounds, saw that the men were at their stations, that the guns were ready and run out, and that plenty of ammunition had been

supplied to the turrets, and then he reported to the first lieutenant that the ship was "clear for action." The first lieutenant at once made his report to the captain, who, in turn, reported to Commodore Riveros, who had already entered the conning-tower. Several signals were made to the *Almirante Cochrane*, which was steaming about a cable's-length astern; and the two ships surged forward in silence to the encounter which was to seal the fate of Peru, to destroy her sea-power, and to go down to history as the battle of Angamos.

Jim was wandering from gun to gun, seeing that everything was in order, and waiting for the action to commence, when he heard a roar of anger and execration coming from the deck above, and, running up from below, he saw that the ships were the *Huascar* and the *Union*, and that they had turned tail, having evidently discovered the proximity of the Chilians, and were steaming to the southward as fast as they could go. But Commodore Riveros had anticipated some such action, and as the *Blanco Encalada*, owing to a foul bottom, could only steam about eight knots, he sent forward in chase of the Peruvians the *Cochrane*, which was capable of nearly eleven knots.

Latorre's ship instantly leaped forward at full speed upon the signal being made, and Jim soon observed through his telescope that the *Cochrane* was a good deal faster than the Peruvians, and that she must inevitably overtake them in a few hours' time. Riveros also sent word down to his engine-room staff that the very last knot was to be got out of his ship, and the effect of the increased steam-pressure was soon observable on the *Blanco*.

At about a quarter to eight there was another change of tactics on the part of the Peruvians. The corvette *Union*, which up to that time had been keeping station on the

Huascar's port quarter, suddenly slowed down and passed under her stern, turned to the eastward, and made for Arica under a full head of steam.

Jim Douglas immediately reported the occurrence to Commodore Riveros, who, after debating for a minute or two as to whether or not he should follow the corvette, finally decided in favour of pursuing the *Huascar*, as she was the more formidable craft of the two; and the Chilean ironclad accordingly was kept on her previous course. Jim then returned to his post, and kept his glass fixed upon the flying steamers in front of him; and hardly had he taken up his position again when he saw the *Huascar* put her helm over and head to the northward, steaming toward the *Cochrane* and the Chilean flagship.

A second later he saw a brilliant flash of flame leap from the *Huascar's* turret; there was a huge cataract of spray as the shot struck the water midway between herself and the *Cochrane*, and then a cloud of greyish-green smoke spouted up on board the Chilean vessel, showing that the shell had exploded on board her, somewhere about her bows. The *Almirante Cochrane* did not reply for several minutes, but silent and grim as death itself, she held steadily on her course toward the monitor.

Then, when she had approached to within a distance of a little over a mile, she in turn opened fire with both her forward turret guns on the *Huascar*, and the battle of Angamos had begun in real earnest. The effect of the projectiles on board the Peruvian was terrible; for both shells struck her on the port bow, penetrated her armour, and exploded inside her hull, and thus temporarily jammed her turret tracks, and covered the deck with debris.

Jim closed up his telescope with a snap, and made his way to the forward turret of the *Blanco Encalada* to

ascertain how long it would be before the gun captains thought they might effectively open fire ; for he was most anxious to share in the combat before all was over. At that moment the officer in the fire-top shouted the news that the range had now lessened to 3000 yards, and the word was immediately given to fire both forward turret guns.

A moment later there was a terrific gush of white flame, a cloud of fleecy smoke, and a tremendous roar as both guns spoke simultaneously, followed by a hoarse, screaming roar as the shells sped through the calm morning air toward their mark. Both missiles struck on the unarmoured portion of the *Huascar's* bows, and pierced her through and through, without exploding, however, as the thickness of steel penetrated was insufficient to detonate the projectiles. The Peruvian at once replied with a shot from her 300-pounder, which struck the *Blanco's* navigating bridge and blew it to pieces.

Meanwhile the *Cochrane* had by this time circled round, and was running on a course parallel to that of the monitor, and at the same time driving her toward her consort, so that the unfortunate ship was now between two fires. *Crash ! crash !* roared the guns as the two Chilean iron-clads converged upon their quarry ; and so excellent was their gunnery that every shot told. Half an hour after the action had commenced the *Huascar's* tiller-chains were shot away, and she at once yawed to starboard, almost in the track of the *Cochrane*. Captain Latorre instantly saw that this was his opportunity to ram, and he accordingly sent his ship straight at the helpless *Huascar*. But the aberrations of the Peruvian ship's course introduced an element of uncertainty which defied calculation, and the result was that the *Cochrane* dashed past her stern, missing her by a short five yards.

And now the *Blanco Encalada* closed in on the other side of the doomed ship, which was already on fire in several places from the disastrous effect of the Chilean shells, and pounded her mercilessly ; while the Peruvians, on the other hand, fought their sorely pressed ship with a desperate gallantry that excited the utmost admiration of their opponents, and in the face of a perfect inferno of fire rove new tiller ropes. But it was all to no purpose. A shell from the *Blanco*, fired by Jim's own hand, exploded immediately afterwards in her stern, killing every man at the relieving-tackles, and causing the now almost wrecked ship again to fall out of control.

It was at this moment that a shell from the *Cochrane* exploded right inside the *Huascar's* conning-tower, and blew the gallant Peruvian admiral and one of his lieutenants to pieces. It was clear that the Peruvians were beaten, yet several brave spirits strove desperately to regain the control of their ship, and, if it might be, break away to the northward and get clear. But it was too late ; for a shell had already exploded in the engine-room and had penetrated one of the boilers.

Lieutenant Garezon, the sole remaining Peruvian officer, then called a brief council of war, at which it was resolved to sink the ship rather than yield ; and orders were accordingly sent to MacMahon, the chief engineer, to open the injection-valves and thus flood the vessel ; but even as the Scotsman set about his task a number of Peruvian seamen ran forward and waved white cloths and towels, in token of surrender.

The Chilean fire immediately ceased, of course, but the battle was even yet not quite over, for down below, in the seclusion of the engine-room, it was not known that the men on deck had surrendered, and the engines were still kept moving. The Chileans therefore reopened their fire,

and the *Blanco Encalada* rushed up close alongside the now fast-sinking monitor, intending to ram her, but was stayed in her deadly purpose by the exhibition of fresh signals of surrender.

At length a boat, manned by a lieutenant, an engineer, half a dozen seamen, and four soldiers, was dispatched from the *Cochrane* to go on board and take possession of the *Huascar*. They met with no resistance; and Jim, who, in a boat from the *Blanco*, had also boarded, at once rushed below, just in time to prevent the Peruvian engineers from sinking the ship. A little longer delay and he would have been too late; for the *Huascar* had already nearly two feet of water over her engine-room floor when he rushed in, revolver in hand, and many of the shot-holes in the hull were by that time all but flush with the water's edge. At the point of his pistol he drove MacMahon and the other engineers away from the valves and closed them. The battle of Angamos was over at last. The *Huascar's* men were then secured, a prize-crew placed on board, and under escort of the *Almirante Cochrane* and *Blanco Encalada* she went under her own steam into the harbour of Mejillones, where she was temporarily patched up and rendered more or less seaworthy.

Two days later the three ships left in company for Valparaiso, where they arrived on the 14th of October, amid the salutes of the forts and the frantic cheers of the populace, who were thankful beyond measure to be freed from the menace of the *Huascar*, which, they had felt, might attack any of their seaports during the absence of the Chilean fleet. Commodore Riveros was promoted to be Rear-Admiral, Captain Latorre to be Commodore, and Jim was made First Lieutenant of the *Blanco Encalada*.

CHAPTER X

The Gun-Runners

THE ovation accorded to the victorious Chilians upon their return to Valparaiso was enthusiastic in the extreme; the officers were everywhere fêted and made much of; and Jim Douglas and Terry O'Meara came in for a very large share of attention owing to the fact that they were British. The sympathies of Great Britain had been decidedly turned in favour of Chili by the atrocities which had been committed by the Peruvian fleet in its war against commerce, and by which English ships had suffered to a very serious extent.

After the battle of Angamos Commodore—or rather Admiral as he was now—Riveros had been greatly exercised in his mind as to what course he should pursue with regard to the corvette *Union*. She had effected her escape before the battle commenced, and when last seen was steaming in the direction of Arica, the most southerly port which the Peruvians possessed. She was a very heavily armed ship, and was nearly, if not quite, as formidable as the *Huascar* had been, and thus still constituted a standing menace to the unfortified ports of Chili. Riveros was in a quandary, for he already had more work on his hands than he knew how to deal with; yet the Chilians resident in the

coast ports were clamouring for him to proceed to sea again and hunt down the cruiser. But he did not in the least know where to look for her; nor could he, by the most diligent inquiry, gain any intelligence of her. She might be at any one of the numerous Peruvian ports; and were he to go in search of her she would quite probably slip past him again in the night, as she and the monitor had once before done.

The fleet had been lying at Valparaíso for nearly a month undergoing the repairs and refit of which they so sorely stood in need, when one morning Jim, from his station on the *Blanco Encalada's* bridge, where he was on duty, observed a signal flying from the official residence of the Secretary for War. In a moment he had his glass to his eye, and began to spell out the signal, which, when completed, ran as follows: "*Blanco Encalada*. Admiral Riveros to call here without delay. I have important orders for him."

"Hallo!" thought Jim, "what's in the wind now? More work for somebody, I'll be bound. I wonder whether the *Union* has been up to any fresh tricks? She has kept remarkably—*suspiciously*—quiet for some time now."

Then the young man made his way down to the admiral's cabin and delivered the message, with the result that the admiral's barge was piped away, and five minutes later Riveros was being pulled across the sparkling blue waters of the bay, to learn what it was that Señor Baquedano wanted to communicate to him.

Several hours elapsed before the gallant Chilean returned aboard, and when he finally did so his first action was to send for Jim Douglas and request him to accompany him to his cabin. Arrived there, the admiral closed the door, locked it, and then leaning across the table toward Douglas, remarked in a low tone:

“Señor Douglas, I am paying you no empty compliment, when I say that I consider you a remarkably efficient and promising young officer. You have carried out, with the utmost credit to yourself, several exceedingly difficult pieces of work, and for that reason I am going to detail you for a service which I suspect will prove even more difficult than any which you have yet been called upon to perform.”

Jim bowed, and did his best not to look too pleased.

“As you, of course, are aware,” continued the admiral, smiling, “we lost sight of the *Union* corvette before the battle of Angamos, and as we had more important business on hand at the moment, we were not able to pursue her; consequently she got clear away. The Chileans in the coast towns have for some time been living in mortal dread of her appearing, some fine day, off one or another of their ports, and bombarding it; and for some weeks past I have been daily expecting orders to sail in pursuit of her and to hunt her down. We have, however, until to-day had no definite news of her whereabouts upon which we could work. But this afternoon I was summoned ashore and informed by his Excellency, General Baquedano, that the Peruvians are expecting several cargoes of arms from Europe, and he has been informed by one of our spies that the *Union* has been dispatched to the mouth of the Straits of Magellan to convoy those vessels to Callao, or whatever Peruvian port they are bound for. If, then, we dispatch a vessel down to the Straits we are almost certain to fall in with the corvette and bring her to action; and if we are lucky we may also secure the arms-carrying vessels. That would of course be in itself a service of inestimable value to our government, since if our enemies cannot obtain arms and ammunition they will soon be obliged to give up the

struggle. To make a long story short, you, Señor Douglas, are the man whom I have selected to perform this difficult, arduous, and decidedly dangerous task. We have recently purchased a steamer, which we have armed so powerfully that she is to all intents and purposes a cruiser, and you will be given the command of her. Your task is, as I have just explained, to hunt down and destroy the *Union*, and if possible to capture the gun-running steamers which she has been sent to convoy. This new cruiser of ours has been named the *Angamos*, in honour of our recent victory; and I shall look confidently to you to uphold the honour of her name. She is quite ready to sail, and you must commission her to-morrow, and sail the same day. It is a very important service for so young a man as yourself, but from what I have already seen of you I am confident of your ability to bring your task to a successful termination. That is all, I think, that I have to say to you, Señor Douglas, except that, should you wish to do so, you have my permission to number your friend, the young engineer, among your crew. Now, good day, young sir, and the best of good luck to you."

Jim saluted in silence, feeling rather at a loss to know what to say by way of thanks, and marched out of the cabin, "as proud as a dog with two tails." He had never anticipated anything like this when he entered the Chilian service, and the news seemed almost too good to be true. Yet he speedily pulled himself together and hurried off to find his friend O'Meara, whom he came across in his cabin, smoking, and to whom he promptly imparted the joyful news. And half an hour later the two lads had packed up their slender stock of baggage and were quite ready for their new adventure. Bearing in mind the admiral's order that he should lose no time in getting his new command ready for

sea Jim, accompanied by his chum, went the rounds of the flagship, saying good-bye to their numerous friends, who betrayed no little curiosity as to the reason of the Englishmen's somewhat sudden departure. But Jim thought it best to keep his own counsel, and only enlightened the Chileans so far as to say that his friend and he had been selected for a special service, the nature of which he was not at liberty to disclose.

A shore-boat was then signalled for, and upon her arrival alongside the two lads got into her and had themselves and their baggage conveyed ashore, where they chartered another boat in which they were rowed out to the *Angamos*. The object of the double journey was to keep, as far as possible, their movements secret.

Having arrived on board, Jim found that everything was in readiness for a start, except for the fact that certain stores had not yet come off from the shore. He mustered his crew aft, however, and proceeded to read his commission to them. His appointment to the command was received with cheers of delight, for the crew was made up, for the most part, of men drafted from the other ships of the squadron, consequently they either knew Jim personally or had heard something of his exploits. They therefore knew what sort of commander they were sailing under, and looked forward to a lively and adventurous cruise. Douglas then sent the purser and a few men ashore to hurry up the belated stores; and by midnight everything and everybody was on board—and the ship ready. But remembering Admiral Riveros' orders as to sailing on the morrow, he waited until daybreak, and then signalled that everything was in readiness for his departure, and inquired whether it was the admiral's pleasure that he should sail at once. The answer promptly came back that the sooner he sailed the better; and Jim,

ordering the saluting guns to be manned and loaded, made his way with a proud step to the navigating bridge, and rang his engines to half-speed ahead, the anchor having already been got up.

There was a responsive tinkle from the bridge telegraph, at which the young commander smiled, for he recognised, in the long-continued response, the hand of Mr. Terence O'Meara. A slight tremor thrilled through the hull as the screw began to revolve, and the shipping in the harbour drifted slowly astern as the fine 1180-ton cruiser gathered way and threaded her path out of the anchorage. Then, as she passed the *Blanco Encalada*, the guns roared out their salute, and a tempest of cheers burst out on board the flagship as her crew recognised who it was that was standing on the cruiser's bridge; and Jim could see the glances of astonishment and the questioning looks writ large upon the faces of his recent companions. But the *Angamos* was past the flagship in about half a minute, and Jim then put his engines at full speed. The cruiser, which had only very recently been built, was capable of steaming at the rate of fourteen knots, consequently she was at least two knots faster than the *Union*, the ship she was being sent to hunt down. She very soon covered the length of the harbour and vanished from the sight of the fleet beyond Punta Angeles.

Although from the information in Jim's possession it was to be supposed that the *Union* was by this time several days' steam ahead of him, it was yet by no means certain where she really was; and it was quite within the bounds of possibility that they might sight her at any moment. Douglas therefore took the precaution to have a man in the fore-top-mast crosstrees, with instructions to keep his eyes wide open, and to report any three-masted, one-funnelled steamer that

might happen to put in an appearance. A fresh man was sent aloft every two hours, since the weather was hot, and it was distinctly irksome to be obliged to remain aloft, exposed to the full glare of the sun for any length of time ; moreover, Jim kept a man at the masthead day and night. There was therefore absolutely no chance of the *Union* being missed should she come within twenty miles from the *Angamos*, for a man with a powerful telescope would be able to cover at least that distance from the cruiser's fore-topmast head.

But despite the strict look-out maintained aboard the *Angamos*, the days passed without any sign of the *Union* making her appearance. The gun-running vessels Jim did not expect to meet until several days after his arrival off the Straits of Magellan ; but he could not quite understand not having yet sighted the Peruvian corvette. Past Concepcion they swept, on the afternoon of the second day out from Valparaiso ; then past Valdivia, and still there was no sign of the enemy ; then Childe Island was dropped astern, and on the fifth day out at about two o'clock in the afternoon Cape Pillar, at the north end of Desolation Island and the entrance to the Straits, was sighted, but the sea was still bare of the ship of which they had come in search.

Still, as Jim remembered, the *Union* was a very fast boat, only two knots slower than the *Angamos* herself, and he thought it not improbable that she might be found lurking somewhere among the numerous islands which make the navigation of Magellan Straits so difficult and dangerous. The young skipper therefore took his cruiser into every little creek and inlet that he came to, in the hope of finding his quarry there ; or, if the water was too shoal, sent away boat expeditions to explore. But still there was no sign of the *Union*, and a week after leaving Valparaiso the *Angamos*

dropped her anchor off Punta Areñas, and Jim went ashore to interview the governor of that port, in the forlorn hope that he might have seen the Peruvian pass, or have heard something of her whereabouts.

Then Douglas received a surprise which he little expected. He found Señor Morales, the Governor, in a state of great perturbation. That worthy man had a body of only forty men under his command to garrison the place ; and he gave Jim the astonishing news that the *Union*, with brazen effrontery, had called in at Punta Areñas that very morning, and that her skipper, taking an armed force ashore with him, had seized Morales, and placed the town under contribution for a supply of coal and a quantity of provisions which he needed.

There was no resisting him, averred the unhappy governor, for the Peruvians numbered quite eighty men and were all fully armed, while the corvette's guns were trained on the town, so that, in the event of resistance being offered, she could have brought the place about their ears.

To make a long story short, said the governor, the *Union* had coaled and taken in a supply of provisions—neither of which had been paid for, by the way—and had steamed off down the Straits to the eastward not three hours before the Chilean cruiser had hove in sight. He was quite sure that *el Señor Capitan* would catch the scoundrel if he sailed at once. And, moreover, the *carnicero* had had the audacity to boast that he was going to convoy two cargoes of arms, which were coming from Europe, back to Peru ; that he should return through the Straits ; and that he should knock the town to pieces as he went past, as payment for the articles that he had received.

Jim ground his teeth with anger upon hearing the recital of this insolence, and he vowed that, could he but find the

Union, he would make Captain Villavicencio eat his words. But unfortunately the *Angamos* was herself short of coal and fresh water, and several hours—very precious hours—were spent in getting these necessaries on board ; so that it was already dark before Douglas finally got away, having promised the Governor that he would do all in his power to prevent the Peruvian from carrying out his threat. But the *Union* was by this time a good many miles ahead, and the navigation of the tortuous and intricate channel, with its furious currents, was not a thing to be undertaken at any great speed at night. Consequently Douglas was obliged to crawl slowly along at about five knots an hour, with two leadsmen in the fore chains, at the very time when he wanted to be steaming fourteen ; and he feared that the *Union* would have got such a lengthy start, while daylight lasted, that it would be a very difficult matter indeed to overhaul her. But there was just one hope for him ; he reflected that she would almost certainly wait at the eastern entrance of the Straits for her convoy, and, if she were there, he would find her, and bring her to action.

The moment that daylight dawned, Jim, whose nerves were by this time torn to fiddle-strings by frequent necessary stoppages during the night, put his vessel at full speed again, and, still with two leadsmen sounding the whole time, the *Angamos* swept along the narrow waters, finally emerging at the Argentine end of the Straits. A fresh disappointment was, however, in store for the young Englishman ; for still there was no sign of the corvette ; and now he did not in the least know in what direction to look for her. Finally, after cruising to and fro off the entrance for some hours, in the hope of sighting the chase, he determined to reach over toward the Falkland Islands, in the hope that the *Union* might have gone there to meet the convoy.

The *Angamos* had, by about midnight on the next night, traversed close upon half the distance to the Islands, and Jim was almost beginning to despair of ever catching the elusive corvette, when a hail came down from one of the men who were still stationed at the masthead: "Light ahead! bearing about a point on our port bow!"

Douglas's heart jumped. Here, surely, must be the craft of which he was in search. He had to wait a few seconds to control his excitement, and then he replied: "How far distant is the light, and what does it look like?"

"It's about eight miles distant," replied the seaman, "and looks like the light at a ship's masthead; but I can now see two red lights, one over the other, arranged just below the white one; and I should say that the three of them, shown together as they are, mean a signal of some sort; for I can see neither port nor starboard lights showing in their usual places."

"Aha!" thought Jim, "this is not so bad, after all; this approaching craft can hardly be our friend the *Union*, I should think; it is more likely that she will prove to be one of the gun-running steamers, and if so—well, her career as a gun-runner will close somewhat abruptly, I think.—Masthead ahoy, what is it now?" he continued aloud, as the seaman aloft gave an excited yell, which he immediately suppressed.

"Why, sir," the fellow answered, "I have just sighted a second set of lights, almost dead astern of the first lot; we have just this moment opened them. There are certainly *two* steamers approaching, sir; and—ah! one of them has just sent up a rocket—I expect it is because she has sighted us."

"Then, by jingo!" soliloquised the Englishman, "they will be the gun-runners, and no mistake about it. How I

wish I knew what lights it has been arranged for the *Union* to show as a signal to them. However, I don't; so that cannot be helped." Aloud, he went on, addressing the excited Chilean at the masthead, "Keep your eye on those ships, Pedro; and report any change to me at once."

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the man, "they are still coming this way." Then Jim called up his lieutenant, a young fellow named Manuel, and instructed him to get the ship immediately cleared for action, and to douse every single one of the lights on board at once. He then went back to the bridge, and, as soon as every light on board had been extinguished, ordered the quartermaster at the wheel to turn the ship's head eight points to starboard; thus, a few minutes later, the *Angamos* was running at full speed, on a course at right angles to her previous one, and was leaving the gun-runners on her port quarter.

Douglas still continued to watch their lights intently, and soon perceived that his failure to give them a signal of some sort had occasioned quick suspicion to their skippers, for they gradually slowed up; and presently the lights drew close together, by which Jim could guess that the steamers had run alongside each other to permit of a conference between the two captains.

A few minutes later Jim turned the *Angamos* eight points to port, bringing her back to her old course, but at a distance of about four miles from the supposed gun-runners. He held on in this direction until he was well astern of them, and then circled right round and headed straight after them, immediately in their wake, at full speed. After a pause of about a quarter of an hour the Peruvian skippers again went ahead on their old course, doubtless much perturbed in their minds at the sudden and extraordinary

disappearance of the craft which, a short time before, had seemed to be coming directly toward them. And so simple were they that they did not suspect Jim's subsequent move, but went straight ahead, keeping all their lights burning as before ; thus he was able to keep them in full view, although they could not see him. Probably it never occurred to either of them to cast a single glance astern !

Jim had reckoned on the suspected steamers being slower than his own cruiser, and he soon saw that he was steaming about three knots to their two, and overhauling them fast. The lieutenant had some time ago reported the ship as cleared for action ; and the look-out aloft stated that there was no other sail in sight ; consequently, Jim reckoned on bringing the enemy to book in about half an hour's time, and dealing summarily with him before the *Union* could complicate matters by putting in an appearance ; a prospect which caused him no little satisfaction, as he felt that he might have had all his work cut out to deal effectively with the three, had the corvette been opposed to him at the same time.

The *Angamos*, vibrating from stem to stern under the rapid revolutions of her screw, plunged along through the black night, while, three miles ahead, the guiding-lights shone out clearer and clearer every moment. Half an hour passed and the cruiser was very, very near ; so near, indeed, that Jim could plainly hear the throbbing of the gun-runner's machinery ; and they must also have caught the sound of his, for he suddenly saw another rocket rush up into the still night-air, and directly afterwards a red glow began to hover over the tops of their funnels, showing that they were trying to increase their speed by coaling up furiously.

But it was of no use. The gun-runners only gained a very few minutes' grace. The *Angamos* was much too fast

a ship for them ; and a few minutes later she ranged up on the starboard side of the sternmost steamer, while Jim, seizing a speaking-trumpet, hailed at the top of his voice : “What ship is that? Heave to! I wish to speak to you !”

CHAPTER XI

Captain Villavicencio Catches a Tartar

FOR the space of quite half a minute there was no reply ; and then, in response to Jim's repeated summons, both steamers, as if by previous arrangement, began to send blue rockets flying into the air ; while both set up a most unearthly shrieking on their steam whistles. They had by this time recognised that the suspicious stranger was not the *Union* ; but, knowing that she must be somewhere in the vicinity, they determined to attract her attention by some means or other, should she be anywhere within sight or hearing.

But Jim smiled grimly to himself as he saw and heard their despairing efforts, for he had kept a man at the masthead for the express purpose of ascertaining whether the Peruvian corvette was anywhere in the vicinity, and the last report, received less than five minutes before, assured him that she was nowhere to be seen.

He waited patiently, therefore, until the discordant blasts on the sirens had ceased, and then hailed again for the skipper to heave-to, vowing that he would fire into him if he did not do so. The young Englishman had imagined

that he saw, by the light of the rockets, a number of men scampering about the decks, but he concluded that it was merely the effect of terror and astonishment, and he was totally unprepared for the gun-runner's next move. The fellow had, when he saw that there was no hope of escape, hastily prepared his ship for action ; and the last words were hardly out of Jim's mouth when a perfect storm of machine-gun fire broke out aboard the flying steamer, and the bullets whistled round Douglas like hail, killing the quartermaster at the wheel, and several other seamen who were not under shelter.

The cruiser immediately yawed wildly, and in another minute would have crashed into the gun-runner, probably sending both craft to the bottom, had not Jim seized the wheel, as it spun out of the dead man's fingers, and brought the *Angamos* back to her course just in the nick of time. At the same moment he saw the leading steamer circle round in a wide curve and head directly for him, evidently with the idea of helping her consort in the fight against the Chilean.

There was no time for any more palaver, thought Jim ; the fellows meant to fight, and to disable him if they could, and he must be ready for them. In a voice hoarse with anger at the useless slaughter of five of his men, he gave the order to fire ; and immediately the guns of the *Angamos* began to speak.

She was armed with several Gatling and Nordenfeldt guns, three 12-pounder breech-loaders, six 3-pounders, and one 8-inch breech-loading Armstrong gun, throwing a projectile weighing 170 pounds, which was mounted forward ; and, immediately upon Jim's command her whole broadside crashed out, raking the foolhardy steamer from end to end, and making her fairly reel under the impact of the iron

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shower. Away forward, Manuel, the first lieutenant, had observed the approach of the second steamer; and he now laid the big 8-inch gun directly for her bows, firing when she had approached to within about four hundred yards of the cruiser. The gun's deep roar rang out loud above the din of the smaller weapons, and a brilliant flash of white light leaped out on board the steamer, the missile blowing a huge hole in her starboard bow, and setting her on fire forward; as was seen by the blaze which at once sprang up on board her.

At the same time the *Angamos* passed ahead of the first steamer, which, by the light of the beacon-fires now lighted aboard all three vessels, was seen to be named the *Miraflores*; and, running alongside the second, the *Huemul*, she delivered every gun of her starboard broadside, bringing down the steel foremast, riddling the funnel with rifle and machine-gun bullets, and killing every man on deck who was not under cover. At the same time a 12-pounder shell, which struck a heap of ammunition which had been placed on the *Huemul's* deck to feed a 32-pounder breech-loader, blew up the whole lot, killing the unfortunate gun's crew, and lifting the gun itself bodily over the side into the sea. The *Angamos* then slowed down a little, and a few seconds later the *Miraflores* overtook her and discharged every available gun into the cruiser, killing several more men, and dismounting one 12-pounder and two 3-pounder quick-firing guns.

But the cruiser's people had meanwhile again loaded their guns on the port broadside, and were not slow in avenging the death of their comrades. They did not require the stimulus which Jim sought to impart to them, by urging them in his excitement to "slap it into the beggars!" for they worked their guns like demons, and, notwithstanding their rage and fury, made such excellent practice that the

Miraflores began to look more and more like a wreck every minute. At last, in desperation, her captain actually tried to run his ship aboard the *Angamos*, with the idea of boarding her ; but the cruiser was several knots faster than the gun-runner, and Jim, perceiving the fellow's intention, turned the *Angamos* to starboard and so avoided the collision, at the same time pouring in another broadside with all his undamaged guns.

Instantly there arose a dense cloud of steam on board the *Miraflores*, accompanied by a loud hissing noise ; her speed suddenly slackened ; and Douglas knew that one of the cruiser's shells had penetrated a boiler ; and he shuddered in spite of himself at the thought of the scene which was now probably enacting down in the gun-runner's engine-room. But, just as he was looking at the stricken ship through his glass, to see whether she had surrendered, he was deafened and well-nigh stunned by an appalling explosion which came from somewhere astern of the *Angamos* ; and pieces of wood and iron, fragments of charred human bodies, exploding cartridges, and wreckage of all descriptions began to hurtle round his ears ; while, from the shelter of the chart-house, to which he precipitately retreated, he saw an enormous column of black smoke hanging over the place near which he had last seen the *Huemul* ; and he had little difficulty in accounting to himself for the disaster.

The steamer had been set on fire forward by one of the cruiser's shells, which had exploded a quantity of ammunition on her deck ; and this fire rapidly spreading, had communicated itself to some of the powder and cartridges which formed the greater part of her cargo. This had forthwith exploded, and, in its turn, blown up the remainder, causing a most terrible catastrophe ; for, when the smoke of the explosion cleared away, there was not a trace of the

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Huemul left upon the surface of the water. She and her gallant crew had been blown, literally, to atoms.

Appalled by the suddenness and extent of the disaster, both the *Miraflores* and the *Angamos* ceased firing for several minutes; and, by the light of the fires which were still burning on board both vessels, Jim could see the gun-runner's crew dashing wildly about, as though in the last extremity of terror, while the ship herself was almost shrouded from view by the dense clouds of steam, coloured ruddy yellow in the light of the braziers, which still gushed in volumes from her pierced boilers.

The cruiser's men quickly recovered their equanimity, however; and, running to their guns, poured in another broadside upon the demoralised crew of the *Miraflores*. This was more, apparently, than flesh and blood could endure; for Douglas saw several men immediately rush upon the captain, who was still inciting them to continue the fight, and cut the unfortunate man down. The crew then rushed aft in a body, hauled down the Peruvian flag, under which both ships had been sailing, hailed at the same time that they surrendered, and begged for quarter. The men frantically waved handkerchiefs, towels, in fact anything white that they could lay their hands upon, to emphasise the fact that they had struck.

"I detest being obliged to give quarter to mutineers," said Douglas to his young first lieutenant; "and these fellows undoubtedly are such, for they murdered their captain, and surrendered against his wishes; but I must accept their surrender, I suppose, as it would simply be murder to continue firing into them now; they are all half crazy with fright. Have the port and starboard quarter-boats manned and lowered, Señor Manuel, if you please, and bring off the crew of that ship; but take the precaution of first putting them

all in irons. After you have transferred them to the *Angamos* I will put a prize-crew aboard, under your command ; and you shall keep me company until we return to Valparaiso. I have a little plan at the back of my mind which I hope to be able to put into execution ; and I will tell you what it is before you finally go aboard the *Miraflores*. Now, be as quick as you can, for there has been a good deal of firing during this action, and the *Union* may put in an appearance at any moment ; and I do not wish to see her—just yet.”

Manuel saluted, and ran away aft to give orders about the boats, and, five minutes later, they were being pulled across the water toward the now motionless gun-runner. Jim saw Manuel climb up her tall sides ; and then he went into his chart-house to await the lieutenant's return, and to think out the details of the plan about which he had spoken to Manuel. However, he first sent a man into the fore-topmast crosstrees, and one into the main, with orders to keep a bright look-out for the appearance of the Peruvian corvette.

Some two hours later Manuel returned, bringing with him the whole of the Peruvian ship's crew, most of whom consisted of ne'er-do-wells of almost every nationality under the sun : and a choice-looking lot of rascals they were. Jim wisely refused to accept the parole of any of them, placed them, still in irons, in the cruiser's punishment cells, and took the precaution to post a strong guard over them. He then received the report of his lieutenant, which was to the effect that the damage on board the *Miraflores* was, with the exception of the shell in her boiler-room, mostly superficial, and could soon be repaired by the prize-crew. Several of her guns had been badly damaged ; but the young man suggested that they could be replaced, together with the

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damaged weapons belonging to the *Angamos*, from the gun-runner's cargo, which consisted, in part, of a number of similar pieces.

Jim carefully digested the report, and then unfolded his latest plan to Manuel, which was to the effect that the *Miraflores*, with a prize-crew aboard, and the *Angamos*, should impersonate the two Peruvian gun-runners expected by the *Union*; and that they should hoist the enemy's flag and go in search of him; thus getting close enough to bring the elusive corvette to action. The lieutenant was therefore ordered to get aboard at once, with his prize-crew, execute the necessary repairs, re-arm the ship out of the cargo she carried, and, as the boiler was too badly damaged to admit of repair at sea, to cut off steam from it altogether, and fire up under the remaining three, which could, even then, give the *Miraflores* a speed of about nine knots.

Manuel accordingly selected his crew, and again went aboard the gun-runner; where he and his men worked with such a will that by mid-day the repairs were complete enough to allow of a start being made. The remaining repairs were of such a nature that it was possible to execute them while the ship was under way. Steam was then raised in the three sound boilers, and, the water being quite smooth, the *Miraflores* was brought alongside the cruiser, which then replaced her damaged guns, and hoisted fresh ones out of the gun-runner's hold with her own derricks.

At length, by five o'clock in the afternoon of the day after the battle, both ships were in a condition to proceed; and, much to Jim's satisfaction, there had been no sign of the *Union* to disturb them. They were now ready to go in search of her; and, with two well-armed ships under his command, Douglas swore that he would pay Captain Villavicencio in full for all the injury that he had done

in the past to Chilean commerce. The Peruvian flag was then hoisted aboard both ships, and each also arranged three lanterns upon her foremast, for use after dark, in the same manner as they had been previously arranged, as a signal, on board the gun-runners. Before starting Jim also questioned the captured crew as to what they knew of the plans of their skipper, and where he had expected to meet the *Union*. The men refused information at first, but, upon being told that they would be kept upon half-rations until they chose to speak, they said that they had expected to meet the corvette almost midway between the Falkland Islands and Cape Virzins, at the eastern mouth of the Straits; also that both captains had mistaken the *Angamos* for the *Union* when they first sighted her. Jim could not understand how it was that in that case there were no signs of the corvette, but he determined not to leave the locality until he had found her and brought her to action.

With the *Miraflores* steaming along in his wake, in the same formation as that adopted by the gun-running steamers, Jim started off on his search for the *Union*, heading W.S.W. for the mouth of the Straits of Magellan, with a man at either masthead of each of the two vessels, and a prize of fifty *pésos* to the seaman who should first sight her. He did not feel altogether happy at the idea of sailing under the Peruvian flag and adopting such a ruse, even for a short period; but his orders to capture or sink the *Union* were precise and imperative, and he considered that, in this case at least, the end justified the means employed, for he knew that he would never succeed in getting alongside the corvette if her captain were once allowed to entertain the slightest suspicion that the two ships were Chileans. True, the *Angamos* was a faster ship; but the *Union* drew far less water; and, since she would probably be found—if found

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at all—somewhere among the shoal waters of the Straits, she might be able to get away by dodging into shallow water among the numerous islands, where the *Angamos*, with her deeper draught, would be unable to follow.

Darkness fell very shortly after the two ships had started on their run toward the Straits; and the lanterns on their foremasts were lighted after the same manner as on the previous night; while they surged along over the indigo-coloured water at the rate of about nine knots an hour, a sharp look-out being maintained meanwhile for the appearance of the *Union*. But to the great disappointment of everybody, that craft most persistently refused to put in an appearance; and when the next morning dawned the high, rocky cliffs of Tierra del Fuego and the Patagonian coast lay before them, and it became evident that the Peruvian had either retreated up the Straits, or that she was still behind them.

About nine o'clock the two ships, still flying the Peruvian colours, entered the Straits, and immediately slowed down to half-speed, not only on account of the intricate navigation, but also to give the *Union* a better chance of overtaking them if it should happen that she really was still astern. Catharine Point was passed and left behind, and the two steamers crossed Lomas Bay into the "First Narrows," where Jim thought it possible that the *Union* might be waiting; but she was not there. They were steaming slowly across Elizabeth Bay, and Douglas was beginning to fear that the corvette had eluded him, after all, when a voice, hoarse with excitement, hailed from aloft:—

"On deck there! I can see three mastheads showing above that hummock of rock at the entrance to the 'Second Narrows'; and there is a column of smoke visible, too, so the craft must be a steamer. We shall open her out in a

few minutes now, and I think she must be that detestable corsair we are looking for."

Jim was, as usual, on the navigating bridge when the hail floated down ; and his first act was to seize a speaking-trumpet and shout the news to Manuel on the bridge of the *Miraflores*. His second was to spring up the ratlines, seat himself alongside the seaman in the crosstrees, and take a good look at what he could see of the stranger from that elevation. A prolonged scrutiny convinced him that the craft could be none other than the *Union* ; and he hurried down to give his final orders, both ships having been kept practically prepared for action ever since the moment on the evening before when they started in company to look for the corvette. There was consequently very little to do in the way of preparation ; and a quarter of an hour after sighting the Peruvian's mastheads both Chilean ships were ready for the fray.

They had not steamed another cable's-length when it became evident that a sharp look-out must also have been kept aboard the corvette ; for her masts began to slide along the top of the ridge of rock, showing that she was under way ; and a few minutes later the entire ship swept into view, flying the Peruvian ensign, and so leaving no room to doubt that she was the long-sought-for *Union*.

Directly she hove in sight Jim signalled to the *Miraflores* to close up and come alongside him, at a distance of half a cable's-length away, and both ships quickened up their speed, by such small degrees as to be imperceptible, to nine knots, which was as fast as the cruiser's consort could steam. Presently a long, dismal wail came floating across the water from the *Union*, and Douglas saw that she wished to attract his attention to a signal which she had just hoisted.

He at once dived into the chart-house for the signal-

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book, and presently he and his second lieutenant were poring over it in an effort to read the communication. But, to Jim's intense annoyance, the signal, when translated, seemed to have no meaning, and he realised that the corvette was making a private and pre-arranged signal, which he was, of course, unable to read.

"Confound it, Aranjuez!" he exclaimed, angrily, to his second lieutenant, "what are we to do now? I did not anticipate this; and if we are not careful he will take alarm and sheer off. I wish I had thought of looking among the papers of the *Miraflores'* captain; they might have contained the key to this private signal."

"Well, señor," replied the lieutenant, "we must delay making a signal of any sort until the very last moment. Then, when he shows signs of becoming suspicious and sheering off, we will hoist, very slowly, a string of flags meaning nothing in particular. It will take him some little time to decipher the flags; and we shall gain a few minutes while he tries to fathom their meaning from his own private signal-book. We ought, by that time, to be close enough to him for you to be able to open fire effectively if the men will only keep calm and shoot straight. Should we fail to disable him with the first few shots, however, he will be off and we may be unable to catch him again."

"Precisely! This is the best—the only thing we can do, Aranjuez," replied Jim, gazing steadily through his telescope at the *Union*. "I am not afraid of being unable to catch him if he will stick to deep water; but I feel convinced that if he takes the alarm he will be certain to run for shoal water at once. Have you got that bunting ready?" he continued, "for, if so, we had better run up a string of flags; he seems to be slowing down, as though he didn't altogether like our looks. Quick! bend on and send them up. There,

that's it—not too fast now ; not too fast. Ah, he has begun to move again, Aranjuez. Don't hoist that signal any farther ; if he only keeps as he is going for another ten minutes he will be under our guns. Oh, good luck, good luck ! he's coming along at full speed, or I'm a Dutchman !”

Jim was right ; the *Union* was coming along at full speed ; yet her captain was not quite such a fool as the young man took him to be. He had seen the two Chileans from his mastheads before they had seen him ; and he had been watching them closely ever since ; with the result that he had arrived at the conclusion that some trick was being played on him. But he fell into the error of mistaking the cruiser for the *Huemul*, and of believing that the crews of both vessels, corrupted by Chilean gold, had seized the ships, after murdering their officers. Villavicencio, therefore, promptly made up his mind to retake the gun-runners, which he felt certain were no longer in Peruvian hands, since his signals remained unanswered ; and when he had approached to within a mile and a half of the two Chilean craft, he very much astonished Jim Douglas by opening fire upon him with his heavy 8-inch bow guns.

Although he could not account for this sudden commencement of hostilities on the part of the *Union*, Jim on his own part had only been waiting for the proper moment to open fire himself, and now he, in turn, gave Villavicencio a most unpleasant surprise by returning his fire with a very much larger gun than the Peruvian imagined that the *Huemul* carried. For a few seconds the skipper of the *Union* hesitated as to whether he should not, even now, turn and run ; for, taken altogether, matters seemed to be rather in the nature of an elaborately-laid trap.

But Villavicencio, now that Admiral Grau was dead, was the bravest man in the naval service of Peru ; and his

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hesitation was but momentary. He continued to steam ahead at full speed, but put his helm over to starboard, causing the corvette to swerve slightly to port, and thus presented her whole starboard broadside to the approaching Chilians, who now hauled down the Peruvian flag and hoisted their own ensign. Then, as soon as his broadside guns bore on the enemy, Villavicencio fired, and a storm of shot and shell came flying round the *Angamos* and her consort, hulling the latter badly, and dismounting two of the recently replaced 12-pounder breech-loaders.

Jim ground his teeth as he saw the terrible execution wrought by the *Union's* broadside; and, exhorting his men to keep cool, ordered them to load and fire as fast as they could. Once more the cruiser's 8-inch gun roared out, sending its vengeful messenger shrieking toward the corvette. The shell struck right at the base of that ship's foremast, and there exploded, scattering death and destruction all round it. The huge spar remained upright for a second or two, then it swayed slightly forward and to one side; the rigging, which had been badly cut up by fragments of flying shell, suddenly parted; and the mast went over the side with a crash that was plainly audible aboard the Chilean ships; and high above the crash of rending wood rang, loud and painfully clear, the agonised shrieks of the poor maimed wretches who had been crushed by its fall.

"Now's your time," shouted Jim, "they are lumbered up with the wreck of the foremast, and will not be able to fire their big gun until they have cleared it away. Fire into her now with every gun that will bear, and keep at it until she strikes. *Miraflores* ahoy! pass under my stern and take up a position on the *Union's* port side when we come level with her; I will engage her to starboard. That's the

style, lads," he continued enthusiastically, as a couple of 12-pounder shells exploded, one on the corvette's navigating bridge and the other at the base of her conning-tower,— "that's the style! Keep it up, and show them how the Chileans fight."

The Peruvian skipper, however, was quicker in getting his wreckage cleared away than Jim had anticipated, and the *Angamos* had not fired many rounds before the cumbersome spar was cut adrift and went floating astern, and Villavicencio got his guns to work again. Their recent disaster, moreover, had not disturbed their aim; for the next 8-inch shell fired by the *Union* blew away the *Miraflores*' funnel, and killed her helmsman, with the result that she turned sharply to port, with smoke and flame sweeping along her deck from the cavity which the shell had blown in it, and very narrowly escaped ramming the *Angamos*. The latter had by this time approached to within half a mile of the *Union*, and now got her machine-guns to work, mowing down the Peruvians who were not under cover as with a scythe, for the deck of the corvette was crowded with men.

After ten minutes of furious bombardment, and with the *Miraflores* crawling slowly up to take part again in the encounter, Villavicencio, brave as he was, realised that he had walked into a trap and had caught a Tartar; for he now recognised the *Angamos* for what she really was—a cruiser. Something had happened to the *Huemul*, that was perfectly clear, and the *Miraflores* was also in Chilean hands; he therefore considered that he was not justified in risking the *Union* any longer in an engagement which could have but one ending, considering the fact that the corvette was now the only effective ship which the Peruvians possessed in their sadly depleted navy. He consequently put up his

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helm and, describing a wide sweep to port, made off toward the entrance to the "Second Narrows," maintaining, however, a well-directed fire as he went with his 8-inch stern gun, which weapon dropped shell with remarkable precision aboard the cruiser and her consort.

Jim had just signalled the *Miraflores* that he was going to chase the *Union*, and that the prize was to rendezvous at Punta Arenas, when an event occurred which made a rendezvous as unnecessary as it was impossible for the second gun-runner.

For, as though determined to do all the damage he possibly could before slipping away, Villavicencio had ordered a number of his broadside guns to be shifted aft, to enable him to maintain as heavy a fire as possible from that part of the ship; and so rapidly did he now fire from his stern ports that the series of explosions looked almost like a continuous sheet of flame, while the solid shot and shell fell round the Chilean ships like hail. The *Miraflores* had by this time dropped about a quarter of a mile astern of the *Angamos*, and the latter was gaining rapidly on the corvette, when the *Union* fired what was intended to be her last shot, a shell from an 8-inch gun. But that shell was the saving of her; for, having pierced the unarmoured sides of the *Miraflores* as though they had been paper, the explosion took effect right among the tightly packed ammunition-cases which constituted her cargo, and the next second she went into the air, as the *Huemul* had done, with an appalling roar, followed by a tremendous shower of all kinds of debris.

From the very nature of the explosion Jim felt practically certain that no one could possibly be left alive out of her whole company, yet there was nevertheless just one chance in a thousand that there might be; and with a groan of disappointment at being obliged to abandon the chase of

the *Union*, he turned his ship round and began to search for possible survivors.

But he found none. A few poor unrecognisable human remnants were all that rewarded him for his attempt at rescue ; and after a precious hour lost in this way, he once more turned his ship's head and went off at full speed after the *Union*.

But that hour's start had been sufficient for the corvette, and had enabled her to evade pursuit among the numerous islands which dot the Straits. Douglas haunted the Straits for a whole week, searching every nook and corner of them for the Peruvian ; but the *Union's* captain had done his work well, and the fugitive was nowhere to be found. And at length, unwilling though he was to give up his search, but anxious not to lose time when the *Angamos* might be required for other and more important work, he started back for headquarters, arriving at Valparaiso just a month after he had left it. He had carried out one part of his task, which was to prevent the two cargoes of arms from falling into the hands of the Peruvians ; but the *Union* still remained at large, and was destined to give the Chileans a great deal more trouble before they finally closed her brilliant and adventurous career.

CHAPTER XII

The Bombardment of Callao

WHEN Jim reported to the admiral he was greatly gratified to find that his chief was perfectly satisfied with the way in which he had carried out the task entrusted to him ; and although the Chilean very naturally regretted that the young skipper of the *Angamos* had not been able to bring the *Union* to book, he fully recognised that Douglas had done all that was possible. And he commended the judgment he had displayed in bringing the cruiser back to Valparaíso, instead of waiting about in the Straits of Magellan on the off-chance of again encountering her ; for, as he explained to Douglas, the fleet was even then on the point of leaving port to harry the Peruvian coast, and the *Angamos* was required to take part in the work.

He was also informed that Captain Castello would take charge of the *Angamos* on the coming expedition, and that Jim himself was, for certain particular reasons, to return to the *Blanco Encalada*, in his former capacity of first lieutenant of the flagship. Admiral Riveros also hinted that he had it in his mind to depute to him in the near future a difficult and extremely important piece of work, the character of which he would fully explain to him later, and this circumstance was quite sufficient to compensate the young

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man for any disappointment he may have temporarily felt at finding that he was not to retain the command of the cruiser.

Accordingly Jim returned to the flagship, where he was heartily welcomed by his old comrades, who informed him that the destination of the squadron was thought to be Callao, and that in all probability the Chileans would bombard the place, and then endeavour to take Lima, the Peruvian capital; so that there promised to be plenty of excitement and adventure in store for everybody.

At length all preparations were completed, and on the 2nd of April 1880, exactly a week after Jim had returned to Valparaiso in the *Angamos*, the fleet, consisting of the *Blanco*, *Huascar*, *Angamos*, *Pilcomayo*, *Mathias Cousiño*, and the two torpedo-boats *Guacolda* and *Janequeo*, left that port and, steaming out of the bay, headed to the northward.

The ships, which had of course been coaled and provisioned at Valparaiso, had no need to call in anywhere for stores, but headed direct for Callao, which was openly stated to be their destination as soon as they were out of the harbour; and on April 9 the squadron arrived within a couple of hours' steam of the Peruvian port. At three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day the two torpedo boats, under convoy of the *Huascar*, went on ahead to scout; and, arriving off the port just about dusk, Lieutenant Goñi of the *Guacolda* rashly determined to make a raid on the Peruvian shipping on his own account, and accordingly slipped away into the harbour toward the place where the enemy's warships were known to be lying.

The *Union* was soon identified as one of the ships lying at anchor, and Goñi promptly headed for her. But when, about half a mile distant from her quarry, the torpedo-boat accidentally ran down a fishing-smack, drowning all the

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crew except three, and losing one of her own torpedo spars. It was by this time quite dark, and in the confusion the precise position of the *Union* had been lost; but Goñi, having rescued the three surviving fishermen, forced them to pilot him to the spot where the corvette was lying, only to discover, when he got close to her, that her skipper had surrounded her with a boom. But undismayed by this, the gallant Chilean forthwith destroyed the boom, and then discovered that he had lost his second spar, and consequently was unable to torpedo the ship herself. The *Union* then opened a smart machine-gun fire, and the *Guacolda* was compelled to beat a retreat, much to Lieutenant Goñi's annoyance.

Unfortunately, this ill-timed attack had put the Peruvians thoroughly on the alert, and as soon as daylight appeared they hauled their fleet, consisting of the *Union*, *Rimac*, *Chalaco*, *Oroya*, and *Atahualpa* into shoal water behind the breakwater of the stone docks, where were also the *Talisman* and two hulks, the *Apurimac* and *Marañon*. They had also several new torpedo-boats, as well as launches and tugs armed with spar-torpedoes, with which they patrolled the harbour to prevent any repetition of an attack like that of the *Guacolda*.

Admiral Riveros was extremely angry with Lieutenant Goñi when upon his arrival off Callao he saw that every possible preparation had been made for his reception; that any further surprise was impossible; and that the attack would now have to be made openly. He therefore called away his barge and, under a flag of truce, visited the senior Peruvian naval officer for the purpose of informing him that Callao was to be blockaded, and that, since bombardment might at any moment become necessary, all non-combatants should at once leave the town and seek a

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place of safety. The Chilean also sent a notice to this effect to the principal consular agent and to the senior foreign naval officer of the neutral warships lying in the roads, eight days being the time allowed for neutral shipping and foreigners generally to leave the place. Upon the representation of the consuls, however, that eight days were not enough, the admiral increased the period of grace to ten days, and then set to work on the task of making his fleet ready for the bombardment which he saw was inevitable.

The defences of Callao consisted for the most part of a series of batteries arranged in crescent form round the shores of the bay. At the extreme S.W. point of land, between the bays of Callao and Miraflores, stood the strongest Peruvian battery, called the Dos de Mayo, which had only very recently been constructed. This contained two 20-inch M.L. Rodman guns, mounted on United States service iron carriages; and these formidable weapons commanded nearly seven-eighths of the horizon. Tarapoca battery, which faced due south over Chorillos bay, contained two 15-inch Dahlgren guns, as also did Pierola battery, facing Callao bay. Next to Pierola came the Torre del Merced, a revolving turret mounting two 10-inch rifled Armstrongs. Then came a brick fort called the Santa Rosa, containing two 11-inch rifled Blakely guns. The Castle, a very old and ruinous structure, the only strength of which consisted of two masonry towers, had four 11-inch rifled Blakelies. Seven large-bore guns were mounted on the mole, together with two small and very ancient 32-pounders. At the north end of the town itself was Fort Ayacucho, containing one 15-inch Dahlgren and one 11-inch Blakely. Then came another revolving turret, with two 10-inch Armstrongs; and finally a sand-bag battery, named the Rimac, which mounted four 15-inch Dahlgren muzzle-loaders.

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It will thus be seen that the Chilean fleet would have all its work cut out if it meant to take the port of Callao, as the first step toward the capture of the capital, Lima.

By April 20 all the foreign merchant ships had gone away, and all the foreign warships had moved out of the line of fire and taken up their position off the mouth of the Rimac River, about two miles to the northward of the port of Callao.

It was half-past one o'clock P.M. on the eventful day of April 22 when Admiral Riveros hoisted a signal on the *Blanco Encalada* for the fleet to weigh anchor and stand over toward the batteries in readiness to engage; and a few moments later the clatter of chain cables was heard, as the men-o'-war got their anchors. The *Pilcomayo*, gunboat, was the first to move, and she took up a position north of the middle of the bay; Jim's recent command, the cruiser *Angamos*, being next in line; with the *Huascar* at the S.W. extremity. The flagship, to the intense annoyance of her crew, was held in reserve; but the men would not have grumbled at their enforced idleness had they but known of what was in store for some of them. Jim, in particular, was never tired of speculating as to what was the mysterious service which Riveros had hinted his intention of employing him upon, and longed for an opportunity which would enable him to distinguish himself.

He was roused from his somewhat moody reverie by the boom of a great gun, and, looking up, he saw a cloud of white smoke hanging over the *Huascar*, which had been the first ship to fire, while a brilliant flash of flame on board the monitor *Atahualpa* showed where the death-dealing shell had struck and exploded. The *Angamos* and the *Pilcomayo* were not slow in chiming in, and presently the air fairly vibrated with the concussion of heavy guns; for the

Peruvians were now replying with their seventeen large-bore guns mounted in the batteries, assisted by the pivot-guns of the *Union* and several large smooth-bore guns from some of the obsolete ships behind the mole or stone pier.

The *Blanco Encalada* was theoretically beyond the range of any of the enemy's guns; and although several shells exploded in the air near her, she was never at any time in the least danger, and Jim Douglas, with his chum Terry, had a splendid opportunity of witnessing a bombardment at close quarters without taking any risks. But both of them were so unappreciative of this immunity that they would have infinitely preferred their ship to be in the thick of the fighting, instead of lying safely out of range as she was.

But presently the Chilians found that it was almost impossible to hit the shipping behind the mole from the position which they had taken up, and as Admiral Riveros' principal desire was to annihilate the Peruvian navy, and thus render Peru harmless at sea, he signalled for the *Huascar* to move closer in, and to take up a position more to the north-eastward. The signal was acknowledged, and presently the monitor lifted her anchor and stood over still closer to the mole, maintaining a terrific fire as she went, and receiving a 20-inch Dahlgren shell on her water-line as some slight return for the damage that she was inflicting. But luckily she was well provided with water-tight bulkheads, or nothing could have saved her, for the sea poured into her in tons through the huge hole which the shell had made in her side.

Nothing daunted, however, her captain, Carlos Condell—the man who had fought the *Covadonga* so splendidly, and been promoted through several ships to the *Huascar*—continued to stand on until he had approached to within a

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mile of the mole, when he dropped his anchor and opened a still more furious and destructive fire upon the Peruvian ships. One well-aimed shell set the *Union* on fire, and for a few minutes Jim and his chum—together with every other man in the Chilean navy, for that matter—thought and hoped that the famous ship had run her course. But Villavicencio was, as has already been seen, a man of resource and energy, and in half an hour he had the fire under control.

Not so fortunate was the school-ship *Marañon*. Although old, she was armed with the newest weapons for the instruction of naval men in gunnery, and though these guns were of small calibre, and therefore of little use against the thick armour of the ironclad, she steamed out from behind the mole and replied heroically to the *Huascar's* fire, killing twelve men who were working the monitor's machine-guns, jamming one of the turret-tracks, cutting one of the anchor cables, and nearly wrecking the *Huascar's* new foremast which had been put in at Valparaiso, before one of the ironclad's 10-inch shells burst in her hold and blew the bottom clean out of her.

"By George, Terry," exclaimed Jim enthusiastically, "did you ever see such a plucky fight? Why, the school-ship has given the *Huascar* a thoroughly nasty mauling! I expect the Peruvians feel more than a bit sore at seeing the ship which used to be the pride of their fleet in Chilean hands. *Caramba!* but the *Marañon* is sinking lower in the water every second; she will be gone in less than five minutes. I hope those brave fellows will be able to get out of her before she goes, for the bay is simply swarming with sharks! Look at the black dorsal fins of the beggars playing round the old *Blanco*! It's enough to make a fellow sick to think of those gallant chaps being torn to pieces by

such monsters as these. Ah ! I am glad to see that Condell has ceased firing to allow those Peruvian launches which are just coming out to pick up the survivors. Too late ! too late !” he groaned, a second or two later ; “there she goes already ! Why, the whole bottom must have been blown clean out of her for her to sink in that short time !”

The launches held back for a few seconds to avoid being caught in the vortex caused by the sinking ship, and then dashed forward to the rescue. They saved a good many, but if Jim had but been close enough he would have seen that his prophecy with regard to the sharks had proved only too true ; for the voracious monsters, darting hither and thither, snapped up the unfortunate men before the very eyes of the comrades who were straining every nerve to save them, the fierce fish sometimes leaping half their length out of the water in their furious efforts to snatch their prey back even when the man had been hauled up on to the boat’s gunwale.

The two lads were fortunately spared a close view of this harrowing sight, and their attention was speedily diverted from the catastrophe by a further commotion behind the mole, when, looking through their glasses, they saw that the Peruvians, encouraged apparently by the damage wrought by the *Marañon*, had got a couple of tugs alongside the old monitors *Manco Capac* and *Atahualpa*, and were towing them out close to the *Huascar* ; their ironclad sides being more capable of resisting the latter’s shells than the *Marañon*’s wooden hull.

Directly the Chileans perceived this new move, the *Angamos* and *Pilcomayo* stood in to the support of their consort, and in a very few minutes Jim beheld the somewhat rare spectacle of a close fleet action in which the sides were well matched, for the two Peruvian monitors were of about equal

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strength to the three Chilean warships. The thunder of the cannon now became deafening, and Callao bay was positively flecked with white by the hundreds of ricochetting shells and solid shot; while even at the distance of four miles the boys could see, through their telescopes, the ships' hulls reel and quiver under the frightful impact of the shot and shell.

But the combat did not last very long, for the merciful darkness came down about an hour after the monitors had been towed out, and put an end to the action. The signal for recall was hoisted aboard the *Blanco Encalada*, the firing gradually ceased, the *Huascar*, *Angamos*, and *Pilcomayo* got their anchors, and shortly after nightfall the whole Chilean fleet was once more anchored safely under the lee of San Lorenzo island.

These tactics and the bombardment of Callao continued day after day, and the port seemed to be as far from surrendering as it was when they began; but the Chileans found, after the first few days, that it was necessary to lay down permanent moorings under San Lorenzo Island and buoy them, so that the fleet could leave its berth every night at dusk, and return when morning dawned. This was because of the fact that the Peruvians had constructed several fast torpedo-boats which prowled round the fleet after dark and attempted to torpedo the vessels composing it; and also to avoid the peril of the floating mines which the enemy put into the water at the mouth of the harbour and allowed to drift down upon the Chilean vessels with the tide.

The flagship had, in particular, been made the objective of several of these torpedo attacks; and it was this fact which put into the head of the admiral a scheme which he had now been turning over in his mind for some days past.

On the 8th of May a meeting of officers was convened in Admiral Riveros' cabin on board the flagship; and Jim was one of the officers present. It was about seven o'clock in the evening, and darkness had already closed in, the fleet then steaming, in double column of line abreast, on and off, about two miles to seaward of their anchorage. As soon as all the Chilean officers had come aboard Riveros took his seat at the head of the cabin table, and straightway plunged into business.

"As you are aware, gentlemen," he began, "we have now been lying before Callao for nearly three weeks; and, despite our best endeavours, the town still remains untaken, and the way to Lima is still closed to us. This cannot be permitted to continue very much longer; for we are running short of provisions and coal, while the ships' bottoms are getting so foul that, should the need for fast steaming arise, we should find that the vessels are incapable of making their top speed by at least two or three knots. If we are compelled to raise the blockade of the place so that we may put ourselves in order, the Peruvians will naturally avail themselves of the opportunity to throw cargoes of arms, ammunition, and provisions into the place; and thus, upon our return, all our work will need to be done over again. Therefore, it is out of the question for us to think of raising the blockade before Callao has fallen; and it appears to me that the principal obstacle in the way of our bringing that to pass is the presence of those Peruvian ships lying behind the mole. We have proved that it is impossible to reduce the port by gunfire alone; a general assault, therefore, seems to be the only alternative left us; and a general assault is equally impossible in the face of the hurricane of shot and shell which those ships are, as we have already seen, capable of discharging.

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“Therefore, as you will doubtless have gathered from my remarks, gentlemen, it will be necessary for us to destroy those ships, and that soon. The question is, how are we to do it? So long as they remain where they are, they are safe from our guns, for they are all protected by the mole. I have therefore summoned you aboard the flagship with the object of ascertaining whether any of you have any plans or suggestions to offer for the solution of the difficulty. If so, I shall be very glad to hear them.”

For a considerable time there was silence in the cabin, everybody seeming to be busily engaged in the endeavour to evolve a plan whereby the admiral's difficulty might be overcome; but at length Jim, who had been cogitating profoundly, with his head between his hands, looked up and inquired whether Riveros happened to possess a chart of Callao harbour. As it happened there was one ready to hand; and a few seconds later Douglas was poring over it by the light of the cabin lamp, with a pencil and a pair of compasses in his hand.

Meanwhile several of the Chilean officers now began to propound schemes, each of which was promising enough—up to a certain point, at which somebody was certain to point out an insurmountable difficulty. One suggested a concerted attack by the entire Chilean squadron; but this was manifestly impossible, in face of the enormously powerful guns which the Peruvians could bring to bear. Another put forward the suggestion that an assault could be delivered in the rear of the town, by landing a number of seamen and marines in Chorillos bay. But Chorillos bay was open to the full “run” of the Pacific Ocean, and upon nearly every day throughout the year there was such a terrific surf on the beach that a landing by means of small boats would be impossible.

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Presently Jim looked up from the chart which he had been studying, and remarked quietly :

“I think, sir, I can manage the business ; but it will probably involve the destruction of a torpedo-boat, her crew, and myself ! As regards myself, I am perfectly willing to take the risk ; but it is for you to say whether you will spare the torpedo-boat, and I suppose it will be a question of calling for volunteers if you should decide to allow me to try my experiment.”

“Let us hear what you have to propose, Señor Douglas,” said the admiral, “and we shall then be the better able to decide whether your scheme is sufficiently promising to justify me in risking the loss of—or rather, by your own showing, throwing away—a torpedo-boat and her entire crew. Such a loss would of course be a small price to pay for the achievement of our object ; but you must convince me that there is at least a possibility of success before I can consent to what you may have to suggest.” Whereupon the young Englishman described in detail what he purposed doing.

When he had finished Riveros sat back in his chair and stared fixedly at the ceiling for some minutes while he drummed upon the table with his fingers. The other officers seated round the cabin seemed divided into two parties, one party sunk in deep thought, while the other stared at the young man as though he had taken leave of his senses.

Then presently Riveros brought his fist down upon the table with a clatter that made everybody start. “By Jove ! young man,” he exclaimed, “you shall try your scheme ; and if you are successful—of which, however, I have very grave doubts, let me tell you—I believe I can promise that there is nothing that Chili will not do for you.

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Caramba! but it is a brilliant as well as a daring idea; what say you, gentlemen? Yes, Señor Douglas, you shall have the torpedo-boat *Janequeo*, and with her everything that you require. As for a crew, I cannot *order* men to go on such an expedition as you contemplate, but I believe that if you call for volunteers you will get your complement. At least, I hope so, for the honour of the Chilean navy. Now when do you propose to make your attempt?"

"Well, sir," replied Douglas, "I am afraid that I shall require all to-night and all day to-morrow to prepare; but I have very little doubt that I shall be able to make the attempt to-morrow night."

"Very well, then," said the admiral, rising; "I will not detain you any longer, Señor Douglas; for, as you have hinted, you will have a good many preparations to make, and the sooner you are able to carry out your scheme the better."

Jim wished the admiral good-night, and retired to his own cabin to snatch, if he could, a few hours' sleep, which might very possibly prove to be the last he would ever take on earth. He left orders with the sentry that he was to be called at midnight; and accordingly at that hour he turned out, washed and dressed, and then made his way to the magazine, between which and his own cabin, with one or two intervals for meals, he was busily engaged until four o'clock in the afternoon of the next day; hearing all the time the thunder of the heavy guns rolling and reverberating over his head; for during the last few days the *Blanco Encalada* had herself taken part in the bombardment.

As soon as he had finished his mysterious preparations in the magazine, he went on deck and spoke a few words to the admiral. The latter listened, nodded once or twice,

and then gave a certain order to the yeoman of the signals. A few minutes later a stream of brilliant-coloured flags soared aloft into the now fast-gathering gloom ; and it would have taken a very sharp eye on shore to discern that the signal was briefly answered by a man on board the *Janequeo*, who waved a small yellow flag.

In another half-hour it had become too dark to continue the bombardment, and the usual signal of recall was made from the flagship ; in response to which the furious cannon-ading ceased, and the ships drew away over to San Lorenzo Island, where they always assembled prior to going to sea for the night. Then, with the flagship and the *Huascar* leading the double line, the fleet steamed away into the offing until they were hidden from the sight of Callao behind San Lorenzo Island. But here, in response to a signal, the fleet anchored, thus departing from its usual custom of cruising to and fro during the hours of darkness.

But even before the ships had lost their way prior to dropping their anchors, the *Janequeo* was seen to sheer out of her place in the line ; and presently she raced up alongside the *Blanco Encalada*, where she came to a standstill. The *Blanco's* side-ladder was then lowered, and Jim went down it on to the small craft's deck. Then a number of seamen took their places on the accommodation-ladder, one on every step, from the top to the bottom, and a group of Chilians likewise formed up on the *Janequeo's* deck.

Then a man made his appearance at the *Blanco's* gang-way, carrying something heavy, which he handled with quite exceptional care. This object he handed to the man at the top of the ladder, who passed it to the next man, and so on until it reached the *Janequeo*, when it was taken aboard and stowed away below with every sign of the utmost precaution. This process was repeated again and

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again, until a dozen of the mysterious packages had been placed on board ; when, in profound silence, the torpedo-boat sped away from the flagship, to visit each of the other craft of the squadron in turn ; receiving two men from one, half a dozen from another, and so on, until her complement was complete. All her lights were then extinguished, and she slid off into the darkness without a sound. There was no cheering from the fleet, not even so much as a shout of "Farewell !" but in his heart every man in every ship silently wished success to the daring young Englishman and his crew. The *Janequeo* was out of sight in half a minute ; and when she had vanished the squadron got under way once more, and continued its usual nightly cruise on and off the port ; while Admiral Riveros, standing on the navigating bridge, strained his ears in an attempt to catch the sounds which should tell him that Jim's effort had been unsuccessful, and that he and his gallant crew were no more.

CHAPTER XIII

Jim is Taken Prisoner

DOUGLAS'S plan was, indeed, a sufficiently daring one ; for he had resolved upon the accomplishment of no less a task than that of blowing into the air every ship in the Peruvian fleet then lying at Callao ; and to do this he had been obliged to set to work on quite a new system. The *Janequeo* was constructed to carry only two spar-torpedoes, and these, of themselves, were quite insufficient for Jim's purpose. For the ships would almost certainly be protected by booms to ward off possible attacks by torpedo-boats ; and, should he manage to approach near enough, the young Englishman would need one torpedo to destroy the boom, leaving him but one more with which to destroy the ship it had protected.

But the destruction of a single ship was not sufficient ; for to ensure the subsequent success of the Chilian fleet it was imperative that *all* should be destroyed. The young man had therefore brought along his spar-torpedoes for use if necessary ; but he had also manufactured a dozen large bombs which he meant to attach to the ships themselves, afterwards exploding them by means of a time fuse. By doing this he hoped to be able to destroy the whole fleet practically simultaneously ; whereas by the spar method,

even had he been able to carry a sufficient number of torpedoes, he would have been obliged to destroy them one after another ; and of course, after the first explosion, the crews of all the rest would be prepared for him. He also had it in his mind to use the two spars themselves as a bridge, should he find that the vessels were protected by booms. Thus, if he could but attach the bombs undetected, he ought to be able to ensure the annihilation of the entire Peruvian squadron.

But it was a terribly dangerous service that he had undertaken, for he had on board the *Janequeo* enough explosive to destroy twelve ships, and if but one searching little machine-gun bullet were to strike her cargo—well, there would be an end of Douglas, his crew, and the torpedo-boat together. However, neither he nor the brave fellows with him gave much thought to the danger which they were themselves incurring ; their country needed them, and if it must be so, she should have them.

Jim had calculated to the utmost nicety the time which he would probably need in getting through his business, and he had cut each of his fuses to such a length that the bombs should explode, as nearly as possible, at the same instant. If he received no check, and remained undiscovered, well and good ; but if he were delayed at all after lighting the fuse, it would be very bad indeed for the *Janequeo* and her crew.

The wheel was in charge of an old quartermaster who knew Callao Bay as intimately as he did Valparaiso harbour ; and as Jim stood beside him in the tiny shelter, watching him peer through the darkness and ever and anon give the wheel a slight turn this way or that, he realised that he had on board most of the elements which go to make up success. Luck was all that was wanting ; and, as fortune

is supposed to favour the brave, Jim had high hopes of bringing his expedition to a successful issue.

Away through the blackness swept the little torpedo-boat, with not a light showing anywhere on board her. The men had even been forbidden to smoke; and the stokers down below put coal on as carefully as though the furnaces were a lady's drawing-room fire, so that there might be no flicker of flame hovering over the top of the funnel, or even so much as a spark to betray their whereabouts. In a little less than half an hour after leaving the *Blanco Encalada* the *Janequeo* sneaked round the south-east corner of San Lorenzo Island, being very careful not to collide with the big buoys which marked each Chilean vessel's moorings. These passed, she slid in between San Lorenzo and Fronton, and entered the Boqueron Passage, coming in sight of the small lighthouse which was, strangely enough, still allowed to show its light at the back of the Dos de Mayo battery. Luckily for the daring little vessel search-lights had not yet come into vogue, or she could scarcely have hoped to escape discovery, for when she crossed the Camotal Bank, previous to turning to starboard in order to run up Callao Bay, she was so close inshore that her crew could plainly hear the shouts of the Peruvian soldiers who occupied the Mayo battery, and who were evidently holding a high carousal. For this circumstance Jim thanked his lucky stars, for there was the less likelihood of any men being on watch; while the noise they were making would prevent them from hearing, as a careful listener might have done, the throbbing of the *Janequeo's* engines and the churning of her propeller.

Just as they had rounded the point, however, and the boat had turned her nose north-east, the bacchanalian sounds from the battery suddenly ceased, and lights began

to flicker among the earthworks. Jim felt his heart stand still, for discovery now would mean the utter ruin of his project, to say nothing of the death of all of them; for a shot from one of those enormous 20-inch guns would send the frail *Janequeo* to the bottom like a stone, if it chanced to hit her. And evidently the Peruvians in that particular battery had taken alarm at something; for a tiny point of light appeared on the ramparts, and then quickly flared up into a bright blaze. A beacon-fire had been lighted, and at any moment now its glare might reveal the presence of the torpedo-boat to the Peruvians.

Jim immediately passed the word down to the engine-room for all the steam she could carry, and the little vessel's speed at once increased by a knot or two. They were nearly in safety now, being about five hundred yards beyond the point, and a few minutes more would take them under the shadow of the higher ground upon which the Pierola battery was placed, when the glare from the beacon would be unable to reach them. But Jim's great fear now was lest the other batteries also might take the alarm and light their beacons; in which case he could not possibly escape discovery.

By a happy chance, however, the *Janequeo* glided into the deep shadow, unobserved; and Jim now ordered the speed to be reduced so that the boat should not make so much "fuss" in going through the water, when she stole along at a speed of about ten knots, fifteen being her maximum, of which she was quite capable, as she was a perfectly new boat. The men in Pierola, being half a mile away from the Mayo battery, had evidently not noticed the beacon light, nor were their suspicions aroused, for all was perfectly quiet as the *Janequeo* crept safely past, with not a light gleaming anywhere in the battery to show that any-

body was awake. This battery and the two lying next to it, to the north, had, as it happened, borne the brunt of the fighting that day, and presumably the men were overcome by fatigue. Next, the Torre del Merced and Fort Santa Rosa were safely passed, and the lights of Callao itself swung in sight; the railway station, which lay close to the waterside, was particularly brilliantly lighted, while the sounds proceeding therefrom seemed to indicate that troops were either arriving at, or were being dispatched from, the place.

They were now only about a quarter of a mile from the southern end of the mole, and Douglas passed the word round for his crew to hold themselves in readiness, although the entrance to the harbour where the ships were lying was still half a mile distant, the mole being nearly five hundred yards in length. The queer-shaped bombs were then got up on deck, and Jim busied himself upon the task of attaching the fuses to them. He was obliged to work by the sense of touch alone, as he dared not, of course, use a light of any description. By the time that he had finished his preparations the *Janequeo* had almost reached the northern end of the mole, and the moment was at hand for the great attempt to be made. Douglas now lessened speed still further, for he did not quite know what shape the defences to the harbour would take. He anticipated that there would almost certainly be a number of floating mines to pass through; and it was more than likely that a patrol of the place might be maintained by launches steaming with their lights out.

A few minutes later the adventurers arrived abreast the northern end of the mole, and were made aware of the fact by a slight diminution of the pitchy blackness caused by the wall of the mole being left on their starboard quarter.

The light on the pierhead was, of course, extinguished while hostilities were in progress; for the Peruvians were much too sensible to leave any beacon by which an enemy might easily make the mouth of the harbour. Jim could now see the forest of spars belonging to the ships which he had come to destroy outlined against the luminous haze formed by the lights of the town, although his own little craft was shrouded in dense blackness; and he ordered the man at the wheel to port his helm a few spokes, upon which the *Janequeo* turned gradually to starboard until she came abreast of the harbour entrance, which was only about two hundred feet in width. He then stopped his engines altogether, and, when the torpedo-boat had come to a standstill, he proceeded to listen with all intentness for suspicious sounds. But everything was as still as the grave, and Douglas began to hug to himself the conviction that events seemed to be turning out fortunately. He could hear no sounds aboard the Peruvian warships; and there was no sign of any patrol launches being about. Having, therefore, taken all the precautions in his power, he started his engines once more and went ahead, dead slow, turning to starboard until the *Janequeo's* bows pointed straight for the harbour entrance. Nearer and nearer she stole, while her crew waited in readiness for action, every muscle tense and quivering with anticipation and excitement. The bombs had been ranged in two lines of six each, one on the port and one on the starboard side, so that there would be no need to carry them far, whichever side the torpedo-boat presented to the enemy.

She was gliding through the water at a speed of about five knots when, suddenly, there was a slight grating sound, the *Janequeo's* bows lifted out of the water, and the boat came to a dead stop, with her screw still slowly churning

up the water astern. The shock caused some of the men on deck to lose their footing, and the whole row of bombs on the port side splashed overboard as the *Janequeo* heeled in that direction. In a second Jim was on his feet and, rushing to the engine-room, bade the man in charge to stop his engines. Then he dashed on deck again, half expecting to hear the crash of guns opening fire upon him, while he listened intently in order to ascertain whether his presence had been betrayed by the disturbance.

There was no sound of alarm, however; and Douglas presently realised that, strange as it appeared, the *Janequeo* was still undiscovered. Then, silently, he and his men set about the task of discovering what had caused the obstruction, and they were not long in finding that a stout chain had been stretched across the entrance evidently to prevent just such an attack as this, and that the *Janequeo* had run in upon this chain where it "sagged" in the middle, her momentum carrying her right up on to it, for her fore-foot was nearly out of the water. Thus they were in a particularly perilous predicament, for if they were discovered now no power on earth could save them; but Jim was thankful beyond measure that he had not been running in at full speed, otherwise the *Janequeo* would most certainly have broken her back and sunk on the instant. The loss of half the bombs was very serious too, but he still had six of them left, and if he could sink a ship with each he would not have done so badly on the whole.

The question now, however, was, how were they going to get clear of the chain, and, once clear, how were they going to surmount the obstacle and get into the harbour? But, "one thing at a time," thought Douglas. Let them get off the chain first of all; and that without breaking the torpedo-boat in half or alarming the enemy. He listened

again intently for any sound which would indicate that the Peruvians were stirring, and then, hearing nothing, he sent his engines astern at full speed, with the concentrated energy of a quarter of an hour's pent-up steam. The water frothed and boiled under the boat's counter, making, in the intense stillness of the night, such a disturbance that Jim thought it must be heard all over the town; but, although the boat rocked from side to side under the strain, grinding her keel and bilges against the chain, she remained immovably fixed; and Jim ordered the engines to be stopped, feeling that so violent a disturbance of the water must speedily lead to their detection.

Douglas's face became drawn, and his eyes took on a very strained look, as he realised what it would mean if he could not get the *Janequeo* off; the Peruvians would give very short shrift to a body of men who had been caught in the attempt to torpedo their fleet. Moreover, he had heard certain gruesome stories from the Chilian seamen to the effect that some of the half-caste troops which the Peruvians had with them were rather addicted to the pastime of torturing any prisoners who might be unlucky enough to fall into their hands—a relic, undoubtedly, of the customs of their Indian ancestors.

After the engines had been stopped, Jim called a hasty council of the crew, consulting with them as to what was best to be done. They could not possibly force the boat over the chain, because, even were the engines powerful enough, the *Janequeo* would break her back in the process.

“If only we had a couple of good strong files we might manage even yet,” whispered Douglas, leaning over the side and feeling at the chain. “The links are not more than half an inch thick, and we could soon cut them.

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Does anybody know whether there are any good stout files aboard?"

As he ceased speaking a man dived down through the tiny engine-room hatch, and presently reappeared, bearing in his hands two large files.

"We have these, señor," he whispered excitedly to Jim; "they were brought on board this morning from the *Blanco*, when I was doing some repairs to the engines, and I forgot to take them back before we started. How will they do?"

Douglas eagerly seized the tools and ran his thumb along the edges. They were very rough and coarse, being hardly worn at all, and were just what was wanted for the purpose. Given sufficient time, and immunity from detection, the work of getting clear of the chain by filing it through would be easy.

"That's the very thing, El Lobo," ejaculated Douglas in a low voice. "Now, start on the job at once. Let one man cut the upper side of the link, and one the lower, and we shall be free in next to no time. Who will take first spell with me?"

Every man silently held out his hand for the other file, and Jim selected a fellow of herculean proportions to take first turn with him. In a few seconds the low rasping sound of the rapidly moving files broke the stillness of the night, and seemed preternaturally loud by comparison with that stillness. The remaining members of the crew concentrated all their powers in the act of listening, so that they might give instant warning to the workers, should the noise appear to attract any attention from the shore.

Jim and his fellow-labourer were soon bathed in sweat, while Douglas's hands, unaccustomed to such toil, grew red and raw and blistered under the friction; for the files, as

is quite usual in engineering departments, were unprovided with wooden handles over the rat-tail shank. Moreover, the task threatened to be long and difficult, in consequence of the awkwardness of the conditions. Jim's spell of work came to an end after a quarter of an hour, however, and another couple of men took their places at the chain. But they had not been working more than five minutes when there was a heavy splash, followed by a cry of disappointment from both men.

It appeared that, while working, the two files had suddenly met in the middle of a stroke, with the result that one of them had been knocked out of its user's hand and had gone overboard. This was a serious loss, indeed, and one that might cost the whole of them their lives; but, as Jim said, it was no use crying over spilt milk, the file was gone, and there was an end of it. The other man must work doubly hard, that was all. Meanwhile, he went down into the engine-room and prowled round to see whether, by some lucky chance, there might not be another file lying about. He was successful in finding a small one, but it was very much worn, and not likely to be of much use; nevertheless, in the hands of a strong man it might still be made to cut a little. He immediately took it up on deck and gave it to one of the crew. To his great relief, he found that one part of the chain was nearly severed. By the time that it was entirely cut through, the lower part of the link was half-severed; and then it was but a short job to completely cut it with the large file.

At length it was done. There was a final rasp of the file, a little snapping noise, a sudden splash as the chain fell into two halves and disappeared below the surface, and the *Janequeo* dropped back in the water with a loud "squelching" noise.

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But they were free ! Free at last ; though every man on board was trembling like a leaf in the wind under the stress that they had undergone. There was no time for delay, however. Many precious minutes had been lost, and there were all too few left in which to complete the work that had to be done. Jim passed the word once more for steam for five knots, the screw began to revolve, and the *Janequeo* stole forward again on her errand of destruction. Jim feared that there might be a second chain across the harbour, a little higher up, but the Peruvians had evidently considered the single barrier sufficient, for there were no more booms.

Now he could see the towering spars of two school hulks, and in a few minutes he passed slowly and silently by them, but without stopping. They were old and practically worthless hulks ; he would destroy them after he had annihilated the ironclad monsters which were capable of doing efficient work.

With carelessness that amounted to fatuity there seemed to be no watch kept on board the ships, and there were no lights visible. All was as still and silent as the grave. The *Union* was the next craft in line ; she was a gunboat, and had already shewn herself capable of stinging pretty severely, but he promised himself to attend to her on the return journey, and pushed on still farther up the harbour. The ships were apparently all lying on the *Janequeo's* port side, so it became necessary to shift the bombs over. By the time that this was done Jim saw a dark, shapeless mass looming up in front of him, crowned by one short, squat funnel and one mast ; and he knew that he was approaching either the *Atahualpa* or the *Manco Capac*, the two monitors which had done so much damage to the Chilian fleet.

Here at last was a foe worthy of attention, and Jim stopped his engines altogether, allowing the *Janequeo* to slide along through the water by her own momentum. It was a fortunate thing that he did so, for when the torpedo-boat was within twenty feet of the monitor she suddenly collided with a floating wooden boom which had been placed round the ironclad. The impact was very slight, however, and Jim presently had his little craft securely moored alongside. He then got overboard on to the boom, with half a dozen men, and, carrying the bomb gingerly in his arms, and followed by his men bearing one of the torpedo-spars, made his way round to that portion of the timber which floated opposite the ironclad's stern. Jim meant to affix his torpedo to the ship's stern-post, so that, if it did not actually sink her, it might at least blow away both rudder and propeller, and so render the ship useless.

Arrived at the stern, he saw that she was his old enemy, the *Manco Capac*, and he at once set to work. The men laid the spar down on the boom and pushed it out until one end was touching the *Manco Capac's* stern-post, the other remaining on the boom. They then lashed the boom-end securely, and Jim, having slung the bomb round his shoulders, started to crawl out along the spar, while the Chilians sat on the other end to make it still more steady.

It would have been a perilous enough journey at any time, but in the dark and with a heavy weight slung round the shoulders it was trebly difficult. Furthermore, the place fairly swarmed with sharks, and Douglas knew what his fate would be should he lose his hold and fall into the water, even if he did not happen to be dragged to the bottom at once by the weight round his neck. Several times his knees or his hands slipped, making the spar quiver ominously, but, fortunately, he retained his hold on the

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pole, and at last, after many a narrow escape, arrived under the ironclad's overhanging counter.

Here the worst part of his task was over, for he could now support himself by clinging to the rudder, and he soon found a large nut, close to the water's edge, from which he could suspend the deadly torpedo. He quickly unslung it from round his shoulders, and presently had it lashed firmly in position against the curve of the *Manco Capac's* counter, the lower edge of the bomb being just about a couple of inches clear of the water. He then fixed the fuse alongside the rudder-post, and after listening to hear whether any one was about, he struck a match and applied it to the loose end.

This being the first torpedo, he had cut a length of fuse to burn for two hours, so that he would have time to do all his work and get away before the first explosion occurred, but when the fuse was lighted it seemed to fizz away with alarming rapidity, and Jim was so startled that he nearly fell into the water.

"That fuse will never burn for two hours," he told himself; "there must be something wrong with it, for at that rate it will not last thirty minutes." He therefore made his second journey along the pole at the best speed of which he was capable, and in a couple of minutes was standing on the boom once more. The seven of them made short work of unlashng the spar and getting it back to the torpedo boat, and the *Janequeo* was soon under way again and stealing up the harbour once more.

The *Atahualpa* was the next ship they came to, and to their unbounded satisfaction they found that she was unprotected by a boom. The Peruvians probably thought that a hostile craft would never get so far without being discovered. The *Janequeo* was therefore run right under her

stern, and the torpedo was affixed without any difficulty, a fuse timed for an hour and a half being lighted. This fuse, too, Jim noticed, seemed to be burning away much faster than it ought, but there was no time to watch it, and the torpedo boat swung off once more on her mission of destruction.

These two craft were, with the exception, perhaps, of the *Union*, which was a fast ship, the most formidable in the Peruvian fleet, and Jim experienced a thrill of satisfaction at the thought that the *Manco Capac* and *Atahualpa* would, at any rate, not trouble the Chilians again. There was another ship lying close at hand, which Douglas judged to be the fast transport *Oroya*, because of her paddle wheels, and he made up his mind to attend to her before running back to blow up the *Union*. He selected her paddle-box as the best place to which to attach the torpedo, and as she, too, was unprotected by any boom, he soon had the bomb fixed in position and the fuse lighted.

"Now, men," he whispered excitedly to his delighted crew, "we will run down and attend to the only other ship of theirs which is of any use—the *Union*. Hard over with your helm, quartermaster, and we will get down the harbour again."

The wheel spun round in Pedro's sinewy grasp, and the *Janequeo's* nose was presently pointing down the harbour.

"Full speed ahead," Douglas whispered down the tube, "we haven't much time to lose." And the little engines began to throb more rapidly, while the screw thrashed the water up astern. They soon passed the *Atahualpa* again, and Jim could plainly make out the jumping sparks which came from the fuse and hissed into the water, but the sight was hidden from any one up above by the overhang of the ship's counter, and he felt fairly certain that it could not possibly be discovered before the bomb had exploded and

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done its deadly work. As they slipped past the doomed monitor Douglas's eye suddenly caught sight of a dark figure with a rifle over its shoulder silhouetted against the luminous haze thrown off by the lights of Callao, and his heart gave a great bound, for the figure had not been there when the torpedo boat passed up, and she could now hardly hope to avoid detection.

Jim's fears were only too well founded, for the sentry saw the *Janequeo* as quickly as Jim saw the sentry, and in a second the fellow roared a hoarse challenge across the water, discharging his rifle at the boat as she swept past, without waiting for any reply. And indeed there was no need for him to expect an answer to his hail, for he knew that no boat ought to be cruising about there if she were a Peruvian; while, if she were a Chilean——

The rifle-shot was the signal for an immediate uproar; it seemed as though every man must have been asleep at his post, for the *Atahualpa's* decks suddenly became literally alive with figures, and rifles began to flash about her in scores, while the bullets pattered round and into the torpedo-boat with most unpleasant accuracy of aim.

"There is no time to destroy the *Union* now," hissed Douglas between his teeth; "we shall have to be satisfied with what we have already done, and, *caramba!* we shall be fortunate if we get away with whole skins. Look out, all people with thin skulls; the *Manco's* people are training her big guns on us! Full speed ahead, below there," he roared, there being no more need now for secrecy; "give her all the steam she can carry, or they will have us for certain."

The screw was already turning at its utmost speed, however, and not another knot could be got out of the flying little steamer; indeed, she was already doing sixteen, or one

knot more than they had any right to expect. Just as Jim spoke, a red rocket leaped up into the still night air with a whistling roar, bursting high up in the sky with a shower of brilliant red stars.

“A signal to the patrols in the bay!” cried Jim; and at the same moment the huge 15-inch gun on board the *Manco Capac* roared out its vengeful message. “We shall have to hurry to get clear now, and no mistake.”

The flash of the great gun, fired at such close quarters, nearly blinded the *Janequeo's* crew, while they were dazed by the hurtling roar of the shell as it sped past, a few feet only above their heads. But the torpedo-boat was now moving very rapidly, and the *Manco's* crew would not be able to load and fire their stern gun again before she was out of its range; but there was still her bow gun to be feared, and the gauntlet of the *Union* and the two school hulks had to be run before they could get clear. It looked as if the *Janequeo* was in for a bad ten minutes; for, after the alarm had been given, it seemed as though every ship in the harbour had lighted her beacon-fire; and Jim could see, by the glare of those which had sprung up aboard the *Union* and her consorts, that guns, both big and small, had been run out ready to fire into the intruder as she passed; while every vessel's side was literally black with riflemen, all waiting to pour a volley into the daring *Janequeo*.

Douglas had almost forgotten, in the prevailing excitement, the fact that torpedoes had been attached to three Peruvian vessels, and, in any case, he did not expect them to explode for at least an hour; when, just as the *Janequeo* had got about fifty yards past the *Manco Capac*, there was a most appalling explosion from the stern of the latter craft; and Jim, turning round, saw that the air was full of blazing fragments of wreckage, and that, even as he gazed, the

great monitor was beginning to settle by the stern. At the moment when the mine exploded, the monitor was just about to fire her 15-inch bow gun ; but the catastrophe of course threw everything into confusion, and the weapon, flung from its trunnions in the very act of firing, discharged its deadly missile high into the air, where it exploded, sending out a blaze of flame like a miniature firework display.

“One of them done for, at any rate !” soliloquised Jim through his set teeth, as he bent over the deck-telegraph of the flying boat to ring for yet more speed. “But now they will surely find the other torpedoes and cut them adrift before they have time to explode. Confound those fuses ! The wretched things must have perished badly, or perhaps they have been wrongly timed in the manufactory.”

The young man had no opportunity, however, for further reflection, for they were now dashing along toward the *Union* and the other two ships ; and after the first shock of terror at the destruction of the monitor, the Peruvians had returned to the guns, and were quite ready to send the *Janequeo* to the bottom.

“God help us !” murmured the young Englishman ; “we shall never get through that tempest of fire ; but I am going to try !”

Nearer and nearer they swept, until the torpedo-boat was only a hundred yards away, and then the *Union* fired her first gun, a large 8-inch rifled weapon, loaded with a shell which screamed horridly as it swept past and plunged into the water just astern. The riflemen raised their pieces, levelled them over the corvette’s high sides, and, at the word of command, which all aboard the torpedo-boat could hear, they sent their volleys hurtling aboard that devoted craft. Jim felt a sharp twinge in his left shoulder, and knew that he

was hit ; two other men fell to the deck, limp as empty suits of clothes. The *Janequeo* was now abreast the *Union*, and, as she drew level, the latter ship discharged every gun that she could bring to bear.

It was simply impossible that she could miss. There was a ripping and tearing of iron as the shower of steel struck the torpedo-boat. Both her funnels were blown completely out of her, and the hissing roar of escaping steam, followed by the screams of the scalded stokers down below, told all too plainly that a boiler had been pierced. The quartermaster at the wheel let go the spokes and collapsed on deck, and Jim staggered to the helm just in time to prevent the *Janequeo* from crashing into the mole. Then, still floating, and with smoke, steam, and flame billowing along her decks and blinding her gallant skipper, the maimed little vessel staggered forward. But escape was not for her. The *Union* had a smart man for captain, and he did not intend the little Chilean hornet to go clear. The forward 8-inch gun bellowed out, and its shell struck the Chilean fair and square on her stern, exploding as it passed into her hull, and literally blowing the after-part of her away.

Her stern plunged downward ; she rolled heavily once or twice, and then turned right over, throwing Jim, in a state of semi-unconsciousness, into the water of the harbour. Then she sank, and the bottom blew out of her as she plunged beneath the surface. At this precise moment, to Jim's fast-failing senses there came the roar of a terrific explosion, followed almost instantly by a second, and he knew that, though his own ship was lost, he had done his duty and succeeded in destroying three of the enemy.

Just as he was on the point of sinking, however, for the last time, a hand shot out, grasped his collar, and hauled him roughly into a boat, while a voice growled out in

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Spanish, "This is the only one afloat, señor ; the rest are down among the sharks, who will not go hungry to-night."

Then darkness closed down over Jim's senses, though not before he had realised that he was a prisoner in the hands of his enemies, the Peruvians.

CHAPTER XIV

In the Face of Death

WHEN Jim recovered consciousness, it was to find himself in a small dark cell, whether on board a ship or on land he could not tell, for there was no window in his prison, and there was not a particle of that motion which he knew there would have been had he been at sea ; but he presently came to the conclusion that he must be in one of the "punishment cells" aboard some ship lying in the harbour, for he thought that, now and again, he could hear the faint splash and gurgle of water close at hand, a sound similar to that which he had often heard when down about the bilges of the *Blanco Encalada*, far below the water-line. He also very soon realised that, in addition to being in prison, he had chains upon his legs, and further, that those chains were fastened to a ring, or staple, set into the wall of the chamber. The poor lad was consumed by a raging thirst, too ; while the wound in his shoulder, inflicted either by a bullet or a piece of flying shell, was occasioning him very great pain. If he only had a light, he reflected, things would not be quite so bad, and he rummaged among his pockets in the endeavour to find a box of matches which he knew had been in his pocket when he was thrown over-board off the *Janequeo*. They were in a tin box, so that it

was just possible that the water would not have had time to get to them during the short period of his immersion ; and, in any case, as his clothing was very nearly dry again, it was more than likely that the matches would be the same.

After trying several pockets, and discovering that they had already been gone through, and that all articles of any value, including his watch and chain, had been taken from him, he found the box for which he was searching in the hip-pocket of his trousers ; and, to his great delight, the wet had not reached its contents. He therefore struck a light, and the first thing his eyes rested upon was a large pitcher of water, and a plate containing a piece of black bread and several slices of pemmican or dried meat. These had been placed close beside him, and he was thankful that he had not accidentally capsized the water-jug in the darkness. He seized and drank at it eagerly, and when he had half-finished the contents he discovered that he was famished with hunger. He therefore struck another match and, by its light, possessed himself of the food, which he proceeded to devour ravenously, and finished off the entire supply before his hunger was satisfied. Having made a good meal, he felt very much better, and then by the light of a tiny fire, made of match-stalks, scraps of straw, and similar odds and ends, he managed, with some difficulty, to strip off his coat and shirt, and to attend, in some small degree, to the wound in his shoulder.

It presented a somewhat inflamed appearance, so he improvised a pad and bandage by tearing strips off his shirt. These he soaked in the precious remainder of his drinking water and wrapped them round the injured part, binding the whole tightly in place with a strip of linen wound right round his body. This having been done, he

felt so much more comfortable that he began to think a little natural sleep would do him no harm, and he accordingly composed himself to slumber upon the heap of straw which had been thrown down in one corner of the cell.

How long, he wondered, had he been in this miserable hole? It must certainly have been a good many hours, or he would not have felt so intensely hungry and thirsty; and he also wondered in what ship, if any, he was, and how the Peruvians would treat the man who had blown up three of their finest ships, leaving them only the bare skeleton of a navy.

He did not think very long, however; for he was fatigued to the point of exhaustion, and soon sank into a state of complete oblivion. How long he had slept he could not tell, but he was awakened by the noise of a door opening, and the shining of a bright light full upon his face. Before he could fully collect his faculties the bearer of the lamp, a burly Peruvian seaman with the name *Union* on the front of his cap, bade him in a rough tone of voice stand up, at the same time producing a key from among a number which hung at his belt and unlocking the young Englishman's irons. As they fell away from his limbs Jim heaved a sigh of relief, which the seaman heard; and hearing, remarked: "You need not be so glad to get them off, you young whipper-snapper; you will be free for only a few minutes, while the captain sees you, and after he has done with you, you will probably be shot—or worse! So you need not look so pleased."

Needless to say, after the communication of this item of information Jim did not feel exactly jubilant; but the fellow, he considered, might only have been speaking thus to vent his ill-will; and in any case Jim was not going to let him see that what he had said affected him in the least. He

therefore merely answered: "We shall see what we shall see; fate is fate, and nobody can alter that."

The fellow made no reply in words, but, uttering a raucous laugh, bade Jim precede him out of the cell, and mind that he played no tricks or he would get a bullet through him. Then the seaman locked the door, pocketed the key, and placing his rifle with its fixed bayonet at the "charge," ordered the prisoner to walk on in front, which Jim did; keeping his eyes very wide open, meanwhile, so as to make a note of the position of the cell and its surroundings for possible use on some future occasion.

They first passed along a passage flanked with other cells, similar to Jim's, that in which he had been confined being the last of a row, and then they came to an iron-studded door, which the prisoner was commanded to open. It opened at his touch, and the Englishman and his guard passed through it, finding themselves immediately upon the *Union's* lower deck. As the Peruvian marine guided Jim through the ship, with the point of his fixed bayonet, the young Englishman took the opportunity to satisfy his curiosity regarding this famous craft—a curiosity which was perfectly natural in view of the fact that he had himself fought an action with her, and chased her while he was in the *Angamos*. He smiled as his eyes fell upon one of the beams supporting the main deck, for in it were embedded several pieces of shell which the Peruvians had not seen fit to remove; and he knew that they were the fragments of a missile, fired by his own cruiser, which had entered one of the *Union's* open gun-ports that day of the battle in the Second Narrows.

But his examination of the interior of the corvette was necessarily only a very cursory one, for he was hurried forward by a prod from the sentry's bayonet whenever he

showed a disposition to loiter. They presently mounted a ladder leading from the lower to the main deck, walked along the latter toward the stern, and presently Jim found himself outside the door of a cabin in the extreme after-end of the ship, which he shrewdly surmised belonged to the skipper.

The sentry then grounded his rifle, knocked upon the door, opened it slightly, and announced in gruff tones: "The prisoner, sir!"

There was a short pause, broken only by the rustling of papers, and then a low, carefully modulated voice replied: "Bring the fellow in, then, sentry"; and Jim was ushered into the presence of Captain Villavicencio, the famous captain of the Peruvian corvette.

Entering, Douglas found himself in a large and airy cabin, situated in the extreme after-end of the ship, opening on to a narrow gallery running round the stern of the ship, from quarter to quarter. Two tall and narrow doors which gave exit on to this gallery, and which now stood open, disclosed a view of Callao harbour, with the water shimmering in the rays of the newly risen sun, for it was early morning. In the centre of the cabin, which was most luxuriously furnished, stood a magnificent mahogany writing-table, at which sat the man whose name was still ringing through a whole continent. He was an extremely handsome individual, and his enormous proportions were well set off by the dark blue and gold of his naval uniform. He had jet-black curly hair, and a short, pointed beard; while the dark eyes which looked out from beneath thick, overhanging brows, seemed to pierce through and through the individual toward whom his glance was directed. Jim saw at once that this was a man among a thousand, one who would make a name for himself, and come to the

front in spite of all opposition. But there was a certain subtle something about the Peruvian which inspired in the young man a feeling almost akin to terror. The eyes, for instance, had a distinctly tigerish look about them, and the man's whole personality was strongly suggestive of a feline nature. Those deep-set dark eyes, Jim knew instinctively, could, at times, flash forth lightnings deadly in their intensity; while that low, purring voice could also take on a note of such deadly menace as would make the hearer's blood curdle. The steel-pointed claw beneath the velvet glove was all too apparent to the young Englishman, and he looked forward to the coming interview with feelings that were anything but pleasant. He felt as though he were in the power of some gigantic cat which might play with him until it was tired of that amusement, and would then turn and rend him. No wonder, he thought to himself, that the Chileans feared this man, and spared no pains in their endeavours to destroy him and his ship.

In response to a wave of Villavicencio's hand, Jim took up a position on the side of the table opposite to that occupied by the skipper, while the sentry posted himself close alongside the prisoner. Then the Peruvian busied himself with some papers for a few minutes, apparently oblivious of Jim's presence. At length, having found that for which he was searching, he glanced up, and his gaze flickered over Jim like summer lightning, inspiring in the young man so strong a feeling of repulsion that it almost amounted to nausea. There was something horribly magnetic in the look, and Jim felt that this man possessed some strange occult power which was lacking in most human beings.

After looking at the young man for a few seconds, Villavicencio turned to the sentry and remarked, "I shall

not need your presence, I think, Jacinto. You may leave the room, but post yourself outside my cabin door, and see that we are not interrupted."

The sentry gravely presented arms, and walked out of the cabin, closing the door softly behind him. When he had gone the skipper took up a blank sheet of paper and a pencil, wrote down a few lines on the paper, and then looking at his prisoner, said in a low, purring tone—

"You are the young Chilean naval officer who was in charge of the torpedo-boat which destroyed three of our ships the night before last, are you not?"

Jim replied that he was.

"Well," resumed Villavicencio, "you will be sorry, I am sure, to hear that all your comrades were drowned when the *Janequeo*—that was the name of the boat, I believe—went down. You are the sole survivor. By the way, how many men had you with you?"

"There were eighteen of us altogether," replied Douglas.

The skipper made a brief note on the paper before him and then remarked softly, "H'm, it is a pity that they were all drowned. I should have much liked to have saved a few more of them."

Although there was absolutely no fault to be found with the sentiment expressed by the captain, Jim felt instinctively that the words possessed a double meaning, and he shivered in spite of the heat of the morning, which was already becoming excessive.

"What is your name, young man?" was the next question, and upon Jim answering, his reply was noted down by his interrogator upon the paper before him. Just as he had finished writing a thought seemed to strike him suddenly and he looked up quickly from the sheet.

"Were you ever on board the Chilean cruiser *Angamos*?"

he inquired, still in the same low and even tones, but with a curious new thrill in his voice.

"Yes," replied Jim, looking him straight in the face, "I had the honour to command that ship upon the occasion when she encountered the *Union* in the Straits of Magellan. If I remember rightly, the *Union* did not stay to finish our little encounter."

"Ah-h-h," breathed Villavicencio, through his teeth, "so you *were* the man in command of the cruiser. I thought you might be when I heard your name, but you struck me as being rather young for the post. By the way, how old are you?"

Jim told him, not without a certain curious sinking sensation about his heart.

"So young as that? Dear me, dear me! it certainly *does* seem a pity, but it cannot be helped," said the captain. "Your name does not sound like a Chilian one, however. Of what nationality are you, if I may ask?"

"I am an Englishman," replied Jim, "and proud of the fact," he immediately added.

Villavicencio appeared to be sunk in thought for a few seconds, during which he ejaculated "*Caramba!*" and "*Carrajo!*" several times. The last item of information seemed to be both unexpected and unpleasant. Presently, however, he muttered to himself, "Well, I don't suppose it matters very much. People are liable to accidents here as well as elsewhere, and if inquiries should be made I can easily plead ignorance. Only, I shall have to alter the method of it. My first idea *might* possibly attract too much attention. However—I shall see." Aloud, he went on, "Have you any relations in this part of the world, Señor Douglas?"

Inconsequent as the question appeared to be, Jim felt

an uncanny, creepy sensation about the roots of his hair, but his voice did not shake as he replied, "No, I have no relations either in Chili or in any other part of the world. I am absolutely alone."

Villavicencio's face at once brightened, and he rubbed his hands, remarking, "Ah! then so much the better, Señor Douglas, for in that case they will not miss you." Then his whole appearance changed, and his voice dropped to a harsh, hissing note as he resumed, "It is a great pity, though, that you are an Englishman, and so well known in the Chilian navy, for that fact prevents me from dealing as I had intended with the miscreant who destroyed two of our ships and seriously damaged a third. But though I cannot punish you as I should have liked, I can and *will* have you shot, and that immediately, on the deck of my ship, the *Union*, the vessel which, you so pleasantly remarked just now, ran away from your cruiser and her consort in the Straits."

"But," exclaimed Douglas, in astonishment, "I am a prisoner of war, and I demand to be treated as such. I have done nothing but my duty, nothing to merit death at your hands; and even if I had, I have yet to learn that one man only, even though he be the captain of a corvette, can sit in judgment upon a prisoner and sentence him to death. I am at least entitled to a proper court-martial, if I am to be tried for my life."

Villavicencio laughed. "What you say, my dear young man, is no doubt technically correct; but *here* might is right, and I will deal with you as I please, as you shall very soon see. Sentry!" he called, suddenly raising his voice and smiling evilly into Jim's face.

For a brief moment Douglas was on the point of leaping across the table and endeavouring to strangle the Peruvian

where he sat, and neither the man's sword at his side nor his huge proportions would have intimidated him, but there was that curious look in Villavicencio's eyes which seemed to hypnotise and chain poor Jim to the spot on which he stood. The next second the sentry entered, and it was too late to think about resistance.

"Sentry," said the skipper, "take the prisoner back to his cell, and see that he does not attempt to escape on the way; he looks desperate. When you have locked him up in safety, send Lieutenant Rodriguez to me at once."

Like a man in a dream, Jim marched to the door, scarcely hearing the skipper's suave voice remarking: "*Hasta là vista, Señor Douglas*; I will not say *adios*, for we shall meet again—once more."

The cabin door then closed, and Jim was conducted back to his cell, followed by the curious glances of the men who were assembled about the decks. Once back in his prison, he seemed able to think more connectedly, and he began to wonder whether or not there might be some means of escape from this semi-human creature's clutches. He had done absolutely nothing to merit this threatened summary execution, and he felt convinced that his sentence was simply due to the skipper's own desire for personal vengeance on the man who had made him turn and fly upon that memorable day at the Second Narrows. If it really was so, there was nothing to be hoped, Jim felt, from the man's clemency; for he clearly knew no more of the meaning of the word "*mercy*" than does an untamed tiger.

Thus thinking, Douglas fell into a deep and gloomy reverie, from which he was aroused by the sounds of footsteps clattering about above his head, accompanied by the occasional clank of arms, and several short, crisp words of command. It sounded as though a body of men had been

formed up on the deck above him, and had then been marched off to some other place. In a moment the horrible truth struck him; it was the firing-party which had been told off for his own execution!

That he was right was proved by the fact that he almost immediately afterwards heard footsteps approaching the door and echoing along the passage. There was a rattle of keys, and he was confronted, this time, by two armed seamen, who roughly bade him get on his feet and accompany them. The poor lad was too thunderstruck to move for a few moments, so one of the men prodded him roughly with his bayonet, and again bade him rise. Jim then got on his legs, with the blood streaming from the thrust which had been inflicted in his thigh, and between the two guards he again made his way to the main deck. This time, however, he was not taken so far aft as before, but was conducted up the main companion stairs on to the upper deck.

Having arrived there, the intense light from the brilliant sun nearly blinded him after his imprisonment in the pitchy blackness of his cell; but as soon as he could see clearly he at once perceived, drawn up in single line across the quarter-deck, a body of men armed with rifles, and he knew that this was indeed the firing-party which Villavicencio had promised him. The skipper was nowhere in sight; but the lieutenant, Rodriguez, stood at the end of the firing-line with his drawn sword in his hand. Jim was piloted by his guards past the end of the firing-party and placed with his back against a number of stout planks reared on end, which were there for the purpose of stopping the bullets after they had passed through the young man's body. It was only when the lieutenant came up to him and began to bandage his eyes that Jim recovered from the state of semi-coma into which he had been thrown by the news of his

impending execution ; but the touch of the Peruvian's hands recalled him to his senses and, flinging the man's fingers aside, he protested vigorously against the gross injustice and inhumanity of the proceeding.

The only answer was a short word of command from Rodriguez, in reply to which the two guards seized Douglas by the arms and pinioned him so that further struggles were impossible. The bandage was then adjusted, and Jim was forced back against the planks. The guards then stood aside ; but, Jim's arms being now bound behind him, resistance was useless and escape impossible. Rather, therefore, than engage in a useless and undignified struggle, he determined to put a bold face on the matter, and meet his fate like a man. Accordingly, he stood still, waiting for the end.

He heard the sharp command to load, then to present ; and he was nerving himself to hear the fatal word "Fire !" when the voice of Villavicencio broke the intense stillness. What he said Jim did not know, but the command to fire did not come. Instead, the rifles were grounded with a clash, and Douglas heard somebody walking toward him.

Then the Peruvian skipper's voice broke the intense silence. "Take off that bandage," he commanded ; and the handkerchief being stripped from Jim's eyes he found himself looking into those of Villavicencio.

"You are reprieved, Señor Englishman," he said ; "I have just received a letter which has induced me to change my mind about you. Instead, therefore, of shooting you, I am sending you, together with a number of your comrades, the Chilean officers whom I captured in the *Rimac*, to the silver mines on the shores of Lake Titicaca. That will, in some sort, compensate me for your insulting remark about the incident in the Second Narrows, for I can

promise you that your life, and the lives of your comrades, will be made a very purgatory for you. Shooting is much too easy a death for you, my friend ; you will die, all the same, in the silver mines ; but the process of dying will be slow and very unpleasant. You will start on your journey to-morrow, señor ; and you will have a splendid opportunity to view the beauties of the country, for you will walk the whole distance, which is several hundred miles. And now, señor, I bid you a final *adios* ! Guards, take the man away and lodge him again in his cell. Look after him well ; for you will pay for it with your lives if you let him escape. Again, señor, *adios* ! ”

CHAPTER XV

On the Road to Sorata

It is small wonder that Douglas felt so unnerved by the ordeal through which he had just passed that his brain seemed numbed to such an extent that he scarcely realised what was going on around him. Villavicencio's taunts passed him by almost unheeded, and Jim most certainly did not realise that he was only exchanging a sudden for a lingering death. He was conscious only of the fact that his life had been spared ; and he walked to his cell, between the guards, like a man in a dream. It was not until the heavy prison door banged to after him that he really awoke once more to a sense of the reality of things ; and, although he speedily realised all that was meant by his being condemned to the silver mines for life, hope sprang up again in his breast. While there was life there was hope ; and he would be a poor sort of man, he reflected, if he could not somehow contrive to escape, and that soon, from the terrible captivity to which Villavicencio had consigned him. And further than that, he determined that, once free, he would make the brutal Peruvian skipper pay, and that heavily, for the mental torment to which he had put his prisoner.

To occupy his mind, Jim then began to examine his

prison, so far as his bonds would permit him to do so, with the view of ascertaining whether there was any possibility of escape for him ; and he came to the conclusion that, though he might possibly manage to break out, if he were given time enough, he would need a very much longer time for the accomplishment of such a task than the few hours which were to elapse before he was to be taken out of the cell and placed among the chain-gang which was to march to the silver mines. No ; escape, if escape was to be compassed, would have to be effected while on the march ; and Douglas fell to wondering who his companions in misfortune would prove to be, and whether they would be likely to be prevailed upon to join him in a dash for liberty. At any rate, he decided, as he fell asleep, nothing could be done, no arrangements could be made, until he saw the men who were to be his fellow-prisoners. Then, and then only, would he be able to judge whether an escape while on the march would be practicable. Jim sincerely hoped that the captives would prove to be "game" men, for once they had arrived at their destination, the silver mines, there would be very little chance of escape. Their freedom would have to be won while on the march, or not at all.

Thus musing, Jim, overcome by the many and varied emotions of the morning, at length fell asleep ; and he continued to slumber peacefully and almost continuously until he was wakened, on the following morning, by the sounds of the clashing of arms and the tramp of heavy footsteps outside his cell door. The young man sat up quickly, feeling much refreshed after his long sleep ; and a second later the cell door swung open, a file of Peruvian marines entered the prison, and he was ordered to rise to his feet. His manacles were then unlocked, and, between his two guards, he walked out of his cell for the last time and proceeded on deck.

There was nobody there when he arrived, and he was ordered to sit down under the port bulwarks, which he did, with the marines mounting guard over him. But a few minutes later Lieutenant Rodriguez appeared on deck, followed by a miserable-looking squad of half a dozen Chilean officers, among whom Jim recognised one or two whom he knew. They were guarded by a score of Peruvian seamen armed with drawn cutlasses. Jim was then roughly hauled to his feet and pushed into the midst of the new arrivals, who, recognising his uniform, tattered and torn though it was, hailed him as a comrade, and received him with, figuratively, open arms. The seven men were then formed up in line, and their names called out by Rodriguez. When they had answered the roll the Peruvian lieutenant called the sergeant in charge of the guard aside and gave him certain instructions; after which the Chileans were once more formed up in the middle of their escort, and the whole body, prisoners and guards, marched down the sloping gangway which led from the *Union's* deck to the wharf, and Jim found himself once more, after many weary months, on *terra firma*.

Still surrounded by their guards, the Chileans marched away along the stone quay wall, and presently, having left the precincts of the harbour, they arrived in the town proper of Callao. There, as soon as they made their appearance, a crowd of roughs surrounded the prisoners and began to deride them and pelt them with such filth and garbage as came to hand. Their destination, Jim discovered, was the *Plaza*, or great square, of the city, where they were to join the main body of prisoners destined for the mines. For the whole of the way the unfortunate men were in peril of their lives from the ferocity of the mob; indeed, in one instance the crowd made such an ugly rush in its attempt

to get at the Chilians, to tear them to pieces, that their guards were obliged to halt, form a hollow square, with their captives in the middle, and repel the attack with their fixed bayonets.

At the moment when the danger was at its worst Jim seized the opportunity to observe the faces of his companions in misfortune, and on only two of them did he perceive any signs of terror ; he therefore decided that when making his plans for escape he would take especial care that those two officers were not made acquainted with them, as they would be not unlikely to disclose the plot, hoping that by so doing they might procure their own freedom without the danger involved in fighting for it. The remaining four held their heads high, and looked as though, if only they possessed weapons, they would have been more than glad to take a share in the fight. These were the sort of fellows, Douglas decided, with whom to discuss plans for escape, and he made up his mind that as soon as he could do so without being observed by the guards, he would take them aside with a view to the arranging of a plan of escape to be put into effect before the prison-gang should arrive at the mines.

At length the crowd, finding that the military guard round the prisoners was too strong for it, abandoned its attempt to wreak its vengeance on the Chilians, and finally dispersed. The procession then resumed its march, and a quarter of an hour later arrived at the *gran Plaza de Callao*, where another depressing sight met Jim's eyes. Round the *Plaza* now ranged rank upon rank of armed Peruvian soldiers, who were mounting guard over a hundred or more disconsolate-looking Chilian prisoners, who were nearly all manacled, some singly and some in groups. There were present representatives of nearly every regiment of

the Chilean army, and naval men of all ratings ; and, since the poor fellows had had no change of clothing during their captivity, most of their uniforms were almost unrecognisable. But Jim distinguished among them officers who belonged to the *Constitucion* and *Valparaiso* regiments, the *Guias*, and *Grenaderos*, together with *Carabineros*, *Lancers*, and *Rifleros*. Most of the naval prisoners were, however, officers ; and Jim was overjoyed to see that among these were several men whom he knew, and to whom he determined to make his presence known at the first possible opportunity. The Englishman was at first a little surprised at the preponderance of military over naval captives, until he recollected that some months before, the *Union*, in command of the redoubtable *Villavicencio*, had captured the transport *Rimac*, which was on her way to Arica with troops. These unfortunate men had been subjected to a rigorous captivity in Callao for some months, and had only been taken from prison that very morning in order to march to the still worse fate of captivity in the mines. Altogether there were, with the new arrivals, about a hundred and fifty Chilean prisoners present on the *Plaza* ; and Jim speedily made up his mind that it would be very curious if they could not by some means or other manage to effect their escape while on the road.

The appearance of the naval prisoners from the *Union* was the signal for cheers from their companions in misfortune, and Jim was speedily recognised by some of the officers near him. The Peruvian soldiers, however, did not seem to relish this manifestation on the part of their prisoners, and several of them ordered the Chileans to keep silent, enforcing the command with savage blows from the butt-ends of their muskets. But at this moment a gorgeously uniformed official rode up on horseback and

spoke to the captain in charge of the guard. Jim could not hear what was said, but the official handed the captain a paper, appeared to give him certain instructions, and then galloped off. Captain Veragua—for that, Jim afterwards learned, was the soldier's name—glanced through the paper, and then began to call the roll of the prisoners. Most of them were present; but a hiatus now and again occurred, which was filled in by a voice responding, "Dead, captain!"

This ceremony having been finished, several armourers made their appearance, with hammers and cold chisels, and proceeded to knock off the prisoners' leg-irons, so that they would be able to march. Then the unhappy men were manacled together in groups of a dozen by means of a long chain to which their right wrists were fastened. Jim, seeing that this process was in progress, unostentatiously moved from where he was standing and took up a position in the midst of a number of naval officers whom he knew, and who had already been making covert signs for him to do so. It thus fell out, as he had hoped, that he was manacled to a group of men whom he already knew, and he determined to lose no time in discussing with them plans for a possible escape.

There was no opportunity for that just at present, however; for his group was practically the last to be attended to; and, directly their chains had been riveted on, the whole body was formed up in a solid square. They were then surrounded by the troops, the order to march was given, and the entire company wheeled to the right off the *Plaza* into the *Callé de los Angeles*, down which they proceeded at a rapid pace.

The low hum of conversation immediately broke out among the Chilians, and it was not checked by their guards; therefore, although it was impossible at present to discuss

anything of a private nature, Jim took the opportunity to ask his friends if they had any information as to the fate in store for them, beyond the fact that they were destined for the mines. He found, however, that the latter fact was practically all that was known. They were to be taken, in the first place, he learned, to the recently erected station at Callao, and then put in the train for Lima. There they were to be imprisoned in the castle for one or two nights, until a second detachment of Chilean prisoners should have arrived from the south, and then the whole body was, as far as could be ascertained, to be marched direct to Sorata by way of Yanyos, Kuancavelica, Guantanga, Cuzco, and Santa Rosa. This constituted a journey of some six hundred miles, the whole of which was to be accomplished on foot! Truly a pleasant prospect! But Jim vowed to himself that it would not be his fault if he did even as much as a sixth of that distance before he escaped. He therefore caused the word to be passed round among his fellow-officers, to whom he was manacled, that he wished to have a private talk with them upon the first occasion that offered; and their nods of comprehension assured him that they pretty clearly understood for what purpose the conversation was to be held.

But they had, by this time, arrived at the railway station, and the detachment was halted in the goods-yard just outside. Although regular passenger communication had not yet been established between Callao and the capital, there had been for some time a line of railway for the purpose of carrying merchandise from the coast to Lima; and when the war began this line was seized upon by the military authorities for the purpose of transporting stores and soldiers. A huge, gloomy barrack of a station had been built, together with a number of auxiliary goods-sheds for

the purpose of holding the war material ; and it was among these sheds that the Chilians found themselves halted. The tedious process of calling the roll was then again gone through, and by the time that that was finished a shrill whistle, accompanied by much blowing-off of steam, and the clank of coupling-chains, announced that the train was being drawn up.

Presently it came in sight round a curve, bumping and jolting over the points, and Jim saw that it was made up of a number of goods-trucks, to which no covering whatever had been attached, so that the unhappy prisoners would be exposed, during the whole of their journey, to the fierce rays of an almost vertical sun, and, as some of the men had already been without water for twelve hours, and there seemed to be no prospect of getting any before their arrival at Lima, it looked as though their journey, short as it was to be, would prove a never-to-be-forgotten one.

The Chilians were now formed up in two long lines, one on each side of the set of metals on which the train was approaching ; and, as soon as it steamed into its place, they were ordered to get on board. Manacled as they were in groups of twelve, this was necessarily a very tedious process, and two hours elapsed before the prisoners were all stowed away. It was then found that too few wagons had been provided, and, as there were no more procurable, the consequent crushing was terrible. But it had one advantage, which was, that the Peruvians were obliged to send a much smaller guard of soldiers than they would otherwise have done, for the simple reason that there was no room for more ; and, as all the Chilians had now stowed themselves away and it would have taken too long a time to rearrange them, all the guards had to go in the last truck, instead of being distributed all over the train. This gave

the prisoners the opportunity that some of them were looking for to have a little private conversation ; but there was no present chance of escape ; for the Peruvians with their rifles could fire from one end of the train to the other, and thus speedily put an end to any attempts of the sort.

The train was on the point of starting when one poor thirsty wretch began to cry out most piteously for a drink of water ; and in a second all the others were also clamouring for some. But the Peruvians merely laughed at their entreaties, telling them that it would do them good to be without for a while, and that they would appreciate their drink all the more when they got to Lima. The signal was then given, the whistle blew, and the melancholy procession moved out of Callao station, to the accompaniment of ironical cheers and wishes for a safe and happy journey from the soldiery and such of the townspeople as had come to witness the departure.

The pace of the train was positively snail-like, and, as the engine had no tender attached, and burned wood instead of coal, the stoppages in order to replenish with fuel were very numerous. At the same time, it being now high noon, the vertical sun streamed down upon the uncovered trucks until they resembled so many ovens. The intense heat, coupled with the inordinate length of time occupied by the journey, reduced some of the prisoners, especially those who had been without water for many hours, to the verge of frenzy. Their supplications for water would have moved the hearts of any but the brutal Peruvian guards, whose canteens were full of spirit and water, and who constantly refreshed themselves therefrom, tortured the thirsty prisoners by holding the water-bottles up to their gaze, and then pouring the contents down their own throats. Gradually a low moan of pain and misery made itself heard in one of the trucks,

which soon spread to the others as the miserable men became unable to bear their tortures any longer in silence.

“By Jove!” exclaimed Jim, “this is awful; what fiends these Peruvians are! We have never treated our prisoners of war as these fellows are doing; I wish I had some water to give them, but unfortunately I have none; moreover, I am nearly perishing with thirst myself. Dozens of these men are wounded, you know, Carlos,” he continued, to a brother officer who was sitting next to him, “and their sufferings must be awful; some of them will go mad before we get to Lima. Hallo! quick there, stop that man!” he yelled, as a haggard-looking Chilean soldier staggered to his feet, his eyes blazing with insanity.

But Douglas’s warning came too late. The Englishman had understood instinctively what the maddened wretch was about to do, and shouted his warning, but the men were packed so closely that there was no opportunity to save him. Before a single individual could rise to his feet the Chilean, manacled by one wrist as he was, had flung himself over the end of the truck and, falling between the metals, was now being dragged along by the train, his shrieks of agony filling all who heard them with horror. The soldier happened to be the end man of his group, and his length of chain was rather longer than that connecting the other members of that particular party; but he had nearly dragged the man next to him to a similar fearful death, for the poor fellow, half crazed with terror, was hanging over the end of the truck with his arm nearly torn from its socket by the corpse trailing on the line. His companions, however, seized him by the body, while several strove to disconnect the chain which fettered him to the awful object trailing beneath the train.

Jim and several others had staggered to their feet and

were shouting to the driver to stop the train, but the man was too far away to comprehend what was said. The Peruvians in the last truck, feigning to believe there was a mutiny of the prisoners, and glad of any excuse for cruelty, began to fire into the huddled mass of Chileans, the bullets doing fearful execution at such short range. The officer next in line to Jim fell dead with a bullet through his heart, and pulled Douglas down with him, thereby saving the Englishman's life, for a perfect hail of bullets whizzed into the truck the moment after he fell.

At this moment there was a fearful shriek from the front end of the truck. The body of the man who had committed suicide had by this time been cut to pieces by the wheels, and the loose end of chain had consequently been relieved of the drag upon it and was now lashing about among the wheels. Before the soldier who had been nearly dragged over could realise this and haul up the chain, the swaying end had got entangled among the spokes of a wheel. It was quickly coiled up and broken, of course, but before this happened it had actually torn the unhappy Chilean's hand completely off, and his shrieks would have convinced the Peruvian guards that something was wrong had they been willing to be convinced, and not been too busily occupied in firing into their helpless prisoners.

The maimed soldier had, however, fainted, and he now fell senseless upon the floor of the car, while his companions, unable to assist him, followed his example by lying down, to be out of the line of fire. The Peruvians, however, fired a few more shots into the truck; but since they could no longer see anybody at whom to shoot, they presently tired of their pastime, and laid down their rifles, laughing heartily among themselves at the sport they had enjoyed.

Douglas and his fellow-officers heard the raucous sounds of merriment, and each in his heart vowed that, if they lived, they would exact a fearful retribution for the inhuman treatment which they had that day received from their captors.

At four o'clock that afternoon the train crawled and jolted into Lima; the trucks were at once surrounded by soldiery who were waiting for their arrival, and the unhappy prisoners were roughly hauled out and formed up in a square as before. The weary, hungry and thirsty prisoners were hurried off to the castle of Lima, where, in the courtyard, they were given the first food and water that many of them had received for nearly thirty-six hours.

While the starving wretches were refreshing themselves, the gates opened to admit another body of about fifty Chilians surrounded by guards. These were herded in among those who had arrived by the train, and likewise were given food and water, upon which they fell like ravenous wild beasts. After having satisfied his hunger, Jim seized the opportunity to look round him a little. There were now about two hundred Chilians present, and it was evident, from the preparations that were being made, that they were all to be taken to the mines. Even as he looked about him the new force of guards began to form up. There were quite a hundred of them, Jim noticed, or about one to every two prisoners. But the Peruvians were all armed with rifle and bayonet, whereas the Chilians were not; moreover, the guards were free, while the Chilean prisoners were manacled together in groups of a dozen.

Douglas had been led to expect that they would be kept a day or two at Lima, but he now saw that he had been mistaken in his surmise. Apparently the second body of prisoners had arrived sooner than they were expected, and consequently the authorities had decided

that all the Chilians should commence their march without delay. The captives were now ordered to stand up, and were formed into one company of five men deep. After this was done a number of Peruvians brought in a couple of wagons, which they at once began to unload, taking therefrom a number of pickaxes and shovels, which were then served out among the prisoners, and each man was given one of each tool. The reason for this, Jim discovered, was that there were not sufficient implements at Sorata to supply the new labourers, so the prisoners were compelled to carry with them the tools wherewith they were to do their work when they reached their destination.

“*Carrajo!*” exclaimed Douglas under his breath, as he watched his fellow-prisoners shoulder the pickaxes and shovels. “Do those fools of Peruvians know what they are doing? Why, they are absolutely delivering themselves into our hands! I was wondering by what means we should be able to overcome a hundred armed soldiers while on the march, but now that we have got these things it will be easy.”

He was aroused from his reverie by receiving a heavy blow on the shoulder and hearing a rough voice exclaim: “Now then, wake up; don’t stand there dreaming all day. What are you thinking about? Here, catch hold of this spade and pickaxe; that’s your share. Ha, ha! it’s a good idea and an excellent joke to make you rascals carry the tools with which we are going to make you work when you reach the mines. That’s it; now get into your place, and look sharp; we shall be on the march in a few minutes. I hope your honour won’t find the weight too heavy, for you will come off rather badly if you do!”

Jim clutched his tools with the grasp of a drowning man, and there was joy in his heart as he shouldered them,

for he did not regard them as tools, but rather as the precious means by which to regain his liberty. Find them too heavy! Well, he rather thought not; he would not part with them, now that they were his, on any account, for a scheme of escape had come into his mind which he believed he could easily put into practice, if he could but secure the co-operation of his fellow-prisoners.

But there was no more time at present for thought; the column was on the point of departure. A bugle rang out shrilly from somewhere in the courtyard; a stentorian voice barked out certain orders, and the Peruvian guards closed up round their captives. Then, just as dusk was falling, the gates were thrown open, and the column of three hundred men marched out of Lima castle into the broad streets, on the road to Sorata.

Nothing could be done that night, Jim decided; and a week elapsed before he could even speak to his companions upon the subject which was uppermost in his mind. Then, one evening, shortly before midnight, when the vigilance of the guards had somewhat relaxed, Jim found his opportunity. He softly wakened the man next to him, and whispered earnestly to him for about ten minutes. The Chilean officer listened intently, and then awoke his companion in turn and passed the idea on to him. Thus the "word" percolated through the sleeping camp, and before morning every one of the Chileans who could be trusted had been informed of Jim's plan, and had agreed to be on the watch for the signal which the young Englishman had promised to give them upon the very first opportunity which presented itself as being likely to promise success.

CHAPTER XVI

The Red Day of Cuzco

A FORTNIGHT had passed since that memorable night upon which Jim communicated his plan of escape to his fellow-prisoners, and still no opportunity had come for the Chilians to make a bid for freedom. For some days after Douglas had communicated with them the weary men had brightened up considerably. The spark of hope which glimmered in the midst of their darkness gave them strength to bear up under their many misfortunes. But as day after day came and went without the signal being given, a dull despair had taken the place of hope, and many a worn-out and soul-sick man fell down in the dusty road, never to rise again. Belonging, as the bulk of the prisoners did, to a southern race, they were very easily cheered up or cast down, and their despair was all the deeper for the short interval of hope which had been given them. The majority of them seemed to have almost resigned themselves to fate, and were looking forward to nothing better than a lifelong captivity in the mines of Sorata. To such an extent, indeed, was this the case that Jim realised that, unless an opportunity should very shortly occur whereby he could put his scheme into execution, his companions would be too profoundly dispirited to attempt to make use

of the chance of escape when it should actually arrive. He had told them, however, at the outset that it would be folly to make the attempt while crossing the mountains; for, even should they contrive to get away, they would be in the heart of a hostile country, where they might easily be recaptured. The young Englishman's plan had been to wait until they got farther south, when they would again be comparatively close to the coast, so that they might escape thither and trust to being able to get away in boats. But the long-protracted waiting, coupled with the intense cold which they experienced up among the mountains, was fast taking all the heart out of the prisoners, and Jim saw that unless the attempt were made almost at once everything would be lost.

They were now nearing Cuzco, having travelled nearly half the distance to Sorata, and the weary men hoped to sleep that very night in the ancient capital of the Incas. Jim had managed to interchange a few hasty words about mid-day with the officers of his own group, all men of high courage and of advanced rank, and they and he had come to the conclusion that the escape should be attempted that very night, should they fail to reach Cuzco, or the night after leaving that city, should they happen to arrive there that day. These few were the only men who had retained their courage unimpaired, and Jim felt that he could rely upon them. It would not do, they all decided, to wait any longer; and although Cuzco itself lay among the mountains, it would be better to make the attempt there, and trust to being able to get away to the sea-coast, than be obliged to defer it indefinitely.

The word to be on the watch and ready was therefore passed round immediately after the mid-day halt; and it was astonishing to see how the news brightened up the

weary men and made new beings of them. Indeed, Jim almost felt sorry that he had not delayed the message until the evening, for he felt alarmed lest the guards should observe the change and guess at its cause. They seemed, however, to take no notice of it, and the forlorn procession moved forward slowly along the great, dusty road, which had not been repaired since the time of Pizarro's conquest. Hour after hour went by and there was still no sign of the City of the Sun; so that, by the time that four o'clock arrived, Douglas decided that the escape would have to be attempted that very night. Just before dusk the clouds, which had been covering the heavens all day long, broke; the glorious setting sun shone out in all his majesty; and there before them in the distance, some fifteen miles away, his beams fell on the city of Cuzco, gilding and glorifying it until it actually did present the appearance of a city of gold. It was a magnificent sight, and drew an exclamation of admiration and delight from the Chilians, weary as they all were; but they hoped that the view which they had just obtained of the place was all that they would ever see of it—as it would be, if fortune would but favour them that night.

It was now perfectly evident that they would not be able to reach Cuzco that evening, and as the darkness was fast coming on the Peruvians began to look about them for a suitable place in which to camp for the night. About half a mile farther on could be seen, through the gathering gloom, a small hillock, crowned with great rocks and boulders, apparently the remains of some ancient Inca fortification. This struck Douglas as a place that might have been made on purpose for their attempt, could the guards but be induced to pitch the camp there. He was casting about in his mind for some scheme by which they

might be induced to select the spot as a halting-place, when the officer in command of the troop rose in his stirrups and, pointing to the hillock with his sword, exclaimed :

“There, over yonder, is the place for us, *mi hijos* ; we will encamp among those boulders. We shall be as comfortable there as in the city of Cuzco itself. Forward, *guerreros* ; we shall soon be there ; and we will have a good long rest to-night.”

“Ay, that you will, you inhuman scoundrel,” muttered Jim ; “but it will not be the sort of sleep of which you are thinking !” However, the prisoners and their guards pushed forward, and in about ten minutes’ time the group arrived at the foot of the little hill, which they at once began to climb.

“Now I wonder,” thought Jim, “whether the next time we tread this road it will be as free men once more. God grant us success this night, for if we fail there will be no second chance for us !”

The other officers seemed to be occupied with similar thoughts, for they examined the whole place and its surroundings very carefully as they ascended ; evidently in order that, should the attempt be successful, they might be able to find their way down in the darkness. At last the summit was reached ; but before the weary men could enjoy the rest of which they stood in such great need, they were obliged to unload the tents and provisions from the pack mules, the Peruvians being much too lazy to do anything for themselves. It was therefore about eight o’clock by the time that the tents were pitched and the evening meal prepared ; and when the food was ready the prisoners ate as much as they could, for they did not in the least know where they would obtain their next meal. This having been done, the pots and pans had to be cleaned and put away ;

so that it was a tolerably weary company which at last sought its tents to lie down and rest.

But not to slumber. There was not a single Chilean among those to whom the plan had been revealed who closed his eyes, lest he should fall asleep and thus not be ready when the momentous signal should be given. Long before this it had been ascertained that there were but four keys for the purpose of locking and unlocking the prisoners' manacles; one being held by the captain, while the other three were distributed in turn among the soldiers, being given to three different men every day, for the better security of the prisoners, and to make sure that there could be no tampering with the guards. Jim had been keeping his eyes very wide open all through the day, and he had noticed which of the Peruvians were the men who had the keys in their possession that night, while he had also carefully marked the positions where they had thrown themselves down to sleep. Two of the soldiers had retired to a tent, but the third had fortunately elected to sleep in the open, as the night was very warm.

The plan arranged was for Jim and his group of manacled fellow-officers to crawl forward, and either kill or stun one of the gaolers—it would be too risky to tackle more than one—secure his key, unlock their own fetters, and then to go silently the rounds, setting free their companions. When all were at liberty they were to seize their shovels and pickaxes and with them attack the slumbering soldiery, killing as many as possible before they were fully awake and could seize their rifles. Should they be discovered before the work was complete, those who were free were to keep off the Peruvians while the remainder were set at liberty.

It sounded rather a barbarous scheme, but Jim could

think of no other which would be at all likely to be successful; and he was by this time rendered altogether too hardened by privation and ill-treatment to feel very much pity for the callously brutal Peruvian guards. Besides, it was his life or theirs, and he had no difficulty in choosing.

The young Englishman waited until midnight, in order to allow the soldiers to get well asleep, and then he silently nudged his companions to make sure that all were awake. They all were,—very wide awake, too,—and, after a few low-voiced instructions from Douglas, the little body of men began to crawl away through the darkness, taking the utmost care that there should be no clanking of chains to betray their movements. Forward on hands and knees they went, all moving together; and they soon passed through the ranks of their comrades, who did not make a single movement while the gallant little band crawled past.

Soon they had left the Chilian part of the encampment behind; and a few minutes later, Jim, who was the leading man of the party, came abreast of the first Peruvian tent. The night was pitchy dark, although there was a young moon, for the sky was covered with dark, low-lying clouds. This was all the better, for it lessened the probability of their being seen by the sentries; but they had to exercise a great deal of caution to avoid colliding with and so disturbing any soldiers who had elected to sleep out in the open.

“Now,” whispered Jim, as they came abreast of a certain tent, looming up dim and ghostly in the darkness; “Pedrillo is sleeping just outside this tent. Forward, men; but carefully, for your lives. One false step now, and all will be lost. Come along, and remember—we must be quick and silent at—at the work which we have to do. There must not be so much as a single struggle.”

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His companions now came up abreast of Douglas, instead of following in single file ; and, still abreast, they crawled toward the slumbering custodian of the key. Nearer and nearer they drew, until only a few yards separated them from their prey, then only a few feet. They were almost within arm's length of him now ; silently they crept forward again, then they paused. The only sound was that caused by the heavy breathing of the victim and the soft, hissing breaths of his executioners. Now they crept forward again until they were close to the man ; Jim plucked the sleeve of the Chilean nearest to him, and together they leaned over the gaoler.

"*Now!*" hissed Jim, and four men flung themselves upon the fellow's body at the same moment that Douglas's hands clutched his throat. There was a short quick scuffle, and it was all over.

In a second he had snatched the key from the dead man's girdle and was feverishly unlocking his comrades' fetters. Then they, in turn, unlocked his, and in less than five minutes the twelve men were all free. Back they sped to their own portion of the camp, and were soon unlocking their friends' manacles, with the result that in less than twenty minutes at least half the Chileans were free, and stood, grasping their pickaxes and shovels, ready for the fight which was inevitable before they could get away.

Then a horrible thing happened.

Among the Chileans was a naval petty officer, a surly, cunning-faced creature whom nobody trusted, and from whom, therefore, all particulars of the plot had been kept secret. Jim had just inserted the key in his manacles, when this traitor shrieked at the top of his voice :

"Help ! help ! the Chileans are escaping !"

Why the fellow did it nobody ever knew, but it was

surmised that, being too much of a craven himself to attempt to escape, he had hoped to purchase his own freedom by betraying his comrades. But he must have been mad to do such a thing, surrounded as he was by Chilians, for he might have felt certain that before assistance could reach him he would be dead.

The mischief, however, was done, and the slumbering camp was effectually alarmed. The sentries squibbed off their rifles, and then, reloading, began to blaze away into the Chilian encampment. The captain's harsh voice was heard giving orders, and in a few seconds the Peruvian soldiers had formed up in line, fixed their bayonets, and were prepared to charge.

"Quick," exclaimed Jim ; "seize your shovels and pick-axes and repel their attack. I will help you. You, Manuel, take the key and free the others while we who are already free keep the Peruvians at bay. But be cool—keep calm, and all will be well ; we will defend you."

Tossing the key to Manuel, Jim seized a shovel, and put himself at the head of his men. "Charge ! charge !" he roared, and the fifty free Chilians charged straight at the place where the Peruvians were known to be.

The next second a sanguinary and ferocious struggle had commenced in the darkness. The Peruvians, hearing the Chilians approach, had levelled their rifles, and poured a withering volley into the charging men, with murderous effect. But, their rifles once emptied, conditions were somewhat more equal, and for a quarter of an hour the combat raged furiously. But such an unequal contest could not last very long ; the soldiers were able, during pauses in the struggle, to reload their rifles ; and this being done, they mowed the Chilians down by dozens. Manuel did his work well, but the liberated men who straggled up,

by twos and threes, did not prove a very valuable reinforcement for the prisoners.

Then, to crown all their misfortunes, the moon came out and flooded the battle-ground with light ; and light was all that the Peruvians needed to enable them to turn a one-sided combat into a massacre. The Chileans, mowed down by the score, at last threw down their primitive weapons and called for quarter ; but the soldiers, rendered still more ferocious by the sight and smell of blood, continued to fire into the defenceless prisoners until they were sated with slaughter. Then the hapless band was surrounded once more, and the unhurt and least seriously wounded men were manacled afresh. The mortally wounded were simply bayoneted as they lay, their friends being unable to stay the murderers' hands.

At last it was all over ; the casualties were counted up and the roll called. The Peruvians had lost but eleven men, all killed, whereas the Chileans were reduced to forty, all told, scarcely one of whom did not bear a more or less serious wound on his person. But the Peruvian captain was furious at what he called the "dastardly attack" of the Chileans on his men, and he swore to take a full and complete revenge when the next morning should arrive. The wretched men were then allowed to lie down once more and sleep—if they could ; and thus the remaining hours of that ghastly night passed slowly away.

The next morning, as soon as day dawned, Captain Garcia-y-Garcia, having appointed a sergeant and a corporal to assist him, constituted himself and his two assistants into what he called a "court-martial," and then proceeded to try the prisoners.

Jim he promptly pounced upon as the ringleader, and subjected the young Englishman to a short examination,

which, however, was the merest farce, for the captain had already determined upon his fate. After a trial lasting, perhaps, five minutes, therefore, Jim was condemned to be shot before mid-day, as were nine more of his unfortunate companions. The remaining thirty Chilians were each sentenced to receive a flogging of a hundred lashes as soon as they arrived at the mines ; and Captain Garcia-y-Garcia promised himself that he would be the man to supervise the punishment.

The ten men who were condemned to death were then separated from the rest of the troop, and were told to seat themselves on the ground at some little distance away, where they were at once surrounded by guards. Garcia-y-Garcia then selected a squad of twenty Peruvian soldiers, and told them off for the firing-party. They were then formed up in a single line and ordered to load their rifles with ball cartridge.

When everything was in readiness, the ten unfortunate prisoners were brought forward and made to stand, also in line, with their backs against a huge rock which was to serve as a background ; and Jim found himself, for the second time in his life, facing a firing-party and condemned to death. But this time there seemed to be no hope or possibility of reprieve. He was surrounded by cruel men who had no feelings save those of a brutal nature, and it seemed as though no power on earth could save him.

Jim was very thankful that no attempt was made to blindfold them, for he had had a bandage round his eyes on a previous occasion, and knew from experience that the suspense of waiting for the squad to fire, not knowing what they were doing meanwhile, was worse than death itself could possibly be.

At last the fatal moment came, and the unlucky men

shook hands with one another in sad farewell. The doomed men then stood to attention, and the soldiers examined the breeches of their rifles to make sure that they were properly loaded.

Then came the word "*Ready!*" and the twenty rifles came up to the soldiers' hips as though by machinery. At the second word of command the barrels glinted in the sun as the men planted the rifle-butts in the hollow of their shoulders. Jim involuntarily cast his eyes skyward as he waited for the final word, and his lips were seen to move slightly.

A painful pause — and then Garcia-y-Garcia's voice rang out, loud, clear, and triumphant: "*Fire!*"

There was a simultaneous crash as the rifles were discharged, and Jim felt a sharp, stinging sensation in his left side and in his arm as he fell back upon the ground. A body fell a second after his own and lay right across his face, and Jim had actually put up his hand to push away the corpse before he realised that he was not at all severely hurt. He was recalled to his senses by hearing the captain's voice commanding his men to reload and fire again into the heap of corpses, to "make assurance doubly sure," as he put it, and Jim had presence of mind enough to abstain from making any further movement, though he suffered agonies of suspense while waiting for the second discharge.

It came at last, and Douglas escaped yet a second time, although the body lying above his own was riddled with bullets. The Englishman could feel now that the bullet which struck him had passed between his left side and his left arm, grazing both, but inflicting no injury worth speaking of. But would he escape after all, or would he have his brains blown out as he lay? The question was soon

answered, for even as he was thinking about it, the body was hauled off his face and a soldier shouted: "Why, captain, here is a man who is still alive."

Garcia-y-Garcia ran up and stood over Jim, looking down at him with eyes that glittered with savage menace. He half turned away to give the order for Jim's death, when he checked himself. His expression gradually changed, and presently he spoke:

"No; I don't think I'll shoot you to-day, Señor Chileño, although I don't know that I may not change my mind later. However, I will spare you this once, for you deserve to escape death after having been shot at twice. Get up!"

Hardly able to believe his ears, Jim rose to his feet, and was immediately secured to the chain once more. Then, still in a dream, he heard the command given to march, and the sadly depleted company moved down the side of the knoll, leaving nearly seventy unburied corpses lying on its summit. How very differently things had looked yesterday at this hour, thought Jim: how sadly everything had changed! Between now and yesterday lay this blood-red day of Cuzco—a day which Jim knew he would never forget so long as he lived.

CHAPTER XVII

A Curious Discovery

AFTER the dreadful episode near Cuzco a heavy gloom settled down upon the poor remnant of the prisoners, and the group marched forward and ever forward in a sullen, hopeless silence. Jim made several efforts to put fresh heart into his comrades, and to persuade them that everything was not lost, even yet, if they could but pull themselves together. He told them that the mines were still some distance away, and that a second attempt at escape might perhaps be so engineered as to be successful ; but it was all to no purpose ; the unhappy Chilians had completely lost heart. Moreover, they seemed to think that the ill-success which had attended their effort at Cuzco was in some measure due to the young Englishman who had, as they put it, misjudged the time ; and Jim soon found that he was everywhere greeted with sullen looks instead of with the cheery smiles which were once accorded him. He therefore gave up the idea of inciting them to another attempt, and came to the conclusion that he would have to make his escape alone, if it was to be made ; and he determined that henceforth he would keep his intentions secret from the others, and would not even invoke their assistance ;

for he feared treachery on their part in the temper that then possessed them.

Watch as he might, however, the young man could find no opportunity, for the guards had redoubled their vigilance, and they kept an especially sharp eye on Jim, for he was considered by all the Peruvians to have been the ringleader of the Cuzco affair; indeed, the soldiers quite failed to understand why Captain Garcia-y-Garcia had shown him any mercy on that occasion. The young Englishman also kept his eyes open, carefully marking in his mind the route by which they had come, so that he might find his way back along it upon some future occasion. They had now left the strictly mountainous region, and had entered upon the flat dusty tableland in the midst of which Lake Titicaca is situated; and it was for the northern end of the lake that the party was now heading.

Then, one day at dawn, they beheld a magnificent sight. There, before them, lying at a slightly lower level than the surrounding country, lay the blue waters of the lake, shimmering in the sun, whose beams had already gilded the snowy summit of Mount Sorata, which lay a little to the south-eastward. It was at the foot of this giant among mountains that the village of Sorata was situated, and Jim realised that their long journey of seven hundred miles was nearly ended.

It was exactly one month after the tragedy of Cuzco that the way-worn troop marched into the village; and a fearful-looking lot of scarecrows the prisoners were by that time, in truth. They had scarcely a rag to their backs, while their boots and stockings had long since worn away from their feet, and they had to tramp along barefooted. They were lean and gaunt, with scarcely an ounce of flesh on their poor starved bodies; in fact they presented the appearance

of a squad of skeletons rather than of living men. Tanned, as they were, to a deep mahogany colour by the fierce sun and strong air, with hair growing down upon their shoulders, and with coarse, matted beards, no one would have believed that a few short months ago many of these men were among the smartest and best-dressed officers in the Chilean army and navy. Jim himself looked as bad as the rest, but he had one advantage which the others had not, for under his tattered rags his brave heart beat as strongly and as resolutely as ever, whereas the Chileans had entirely lost their courage.

The sun was just setting, and the long day's work was over, when the Chileans arrived, and they were just in time to see the prisoners who were already there taking their evening meal. A few half-starved curs had run out to meet the new arrivals, and now jumped and barked savagely around them in a transport of fury at seeing a few new faces. The village, if such it could be called, consisted simply of a number of long wooden huts roofed over with corrugated iron. Some of the huts were used as barracks for the convicts, some as quarters for their guards, and a still larger number as engine, boiler, machinery, and store houses for the purpose of extracting and storing the silver from the ore. The whole place was intersected by narrow-gauge tram-lines, upon which were run little wagons which a couple of men could push, for bringing the raw material from the mine to the smelting-houses. Several of these standing about in various parts of the village added to the general uncouthness and desolation of the scene; and Jim felt that if he were compelled to stay here for very long, he would go mad with the very dismalness and horror of his surroundings.

But he was not allowed very much time for reflection, for directly the much-diminished roll was called, the prisoners

were conducted to a shed containing a large number of sacks of crushed Indian corn, the staple food of the Indians in Peru ; and here a small quantity of the unappetising stuff was served out, together with a tin can, to each man. This corn, made into a sort of porridge by boiling it with water, was to constitute the prisoners' evening meal ; and they were given to understand that all their other meals would consist of the same food. The unfortunate men, who had been freed from their shackles as soon as they arrived at their destination, then took their tins, and, making themselves as comfortable as they could in the prisoners' compound, proceeded to boil and eat their unwholesome-looking porridge. By the time that this was done, darkness had fallen, and the village was lighted up by means of rough paraffin lamps hoisted on poles. By the light of these the prisoners were now herded together once more and marched away to the long iron sheds in which they were told they would have to sleep. But before entering these hovels, a number of Peruvian soldiers brought out a quantity of clothing, made on purpose for the convicts, and the Chilians were ordered to strip and put these on. Jim was very glad to have another suit, although it consisted of only a pair of rough blue serge trousers, a kind of jersey, a neckcloth, and a jacket, for his own garments were so torn and ragged that they were hardly sufficient to cover him. They were then told that a pair of clogs would be served out to each of them the next morning at daybreak, when work would commence, but that now they were expected to turn in for the night, according to the rules governing this little convict settlement.

The iron-roofed shed looked even more uninviting inside than outside. Down each side were ranged narrow platforms, which were divided into "beds" by narrow strips of

wood about three inches in height, and all the covering allowed was a pair of very old dirty blankets; of mattresses there was no sign, not even loose straw being provided, and the whole interior was dirty and odoriferous beyond description. However, considered Jim philosophically, prisoners cannot be choosers; and having arranged his blankets as comfortably as was possible under the circumstances, he turned in and slept the sleep of the utterly weary.

The next morning he was awakened by a hideous clanging noise, which proceeded from a huge gong hung in the courtyard. Everybody immediately sprang out of bed, folded up their blankets, and streamed out into the courtyard, where, Jim noticed, there was a narrow stream of running water. He availed himself of this to have a good wash, a proceeding which excited the laughter of the gaolers, many of whom looked as though they had never touched water in any form during the whole of their lives. This having been done, he procured his tin and his daily allowance of meal and prepared his breakfast, for which he had an excellent appetite. When this was over, the prisoners were told off in groups of ten each, a soldier with loaded rifle mounting guard over each section. These were marched away one by one, until only one group remained, and Jim had not yet been apportioned to a party; but he soon found that Captain Garcia-y-Garcia had represented him to the Governor as being a most dangerous character, so that he was to have a guard all to himself, and not to be allowed near the other prisoners. This arrangement suited Jim admirably, for he had already made up his mind that if he was to escape at all, it must be alone, and he would have a much better chance of getting away while working by himself than he would get if he were one of a gang; for it would be strange indeed if a strong,

able-bodied young Englishman could not get the better of a mere Peruvian soldier.

He therefore accepted the situation with much satisfaction, which, however, he took care not to show, and marched off toward the mine with his guard. When he arrived at the place where he was to work, he saw that the word "mine" hardly described the place, for it was not in the least like an English mine. The so-called mines consisted of a number of ancient Inca workings which, after having lain idle for hundreds of years, had been again started by the Peruvians. Instead of a shaft being driven down into the earth, and galleries being cut in various directions from that shaft, the mines simply consisted of tunnels driven horizontally into the side of a hill. It was a primitive method, and one adopted by the Incas; but the ground was so rich and ore so plentiful that this method was found as good as any other, and cheaper than most. There were scores of these tunnels, some of which had been exhausted and abandoned, while the ore was being taken out of others by truck-loads at a time, the little narrow-gauge tram-lines running from the tunnel-mouths right down into the village.

By the time that Jim had arrived at his allotted post his fellow-prisoners had disappeared elsewhere, and he found, to his great joy, that he was working on the side of the hill remote from all the other convicts. He could hardly conceal his satisfaction, for everything was falling out much better than he could possibly have expected; and, under the influence of his newly awakened hope, he became quite chatty and affable with the sentry, who gradually thawed under the Englishman's flow of talk and high spirits. Douglas now found that he was not expected to extract ore, for indeed there was no tram-line here whereby it could be carried away. This particular tunnel had been closed up by

a fall of rock as long ago as the sixteenth century and had never since been worked, and as the Peruvians thought that there might still be a good supply of ore there, they had determined to open it once more. This, then, was Jim's task, and he approached the blocked-up tunnel-mouth determined to do as much work as he possibly could, and thus endeavour to earn the sentry's goodwill, for that, he decided, should be his first step on the road to freedom.

By the time that dusk had fallen and work had ceased for the day, Douglas had cleared away several cubic yards of rubble from the tunnel-mouth, and had also impressed the sentry so favourably that the latter not only thought himself lucky in having charge of so docile a prisoner, but also decided that it would not be necessary for him to exercise quite so much vigilance as he had expected to be obliged to do.

Morning after morning the Englishman and the Peruvian went up to the tunnel, and the two soon became, to all appearance, very excellent friends. Jim steadily worked his way farther and farther into the tunnel, and the sentry sat at the entrance thereto, smoking and dozing, instead of standing close beside the prisoner during the whole day, as he had done at first. Douglas was delighted, for this was precisely what he wanted. The soldier's suspicions were being lulled to sleep very effectively, and Jim told himself that the time was fast approaching when he might try to hoodwink the fellow still further. However, in order not to act too hastily, he allowed a few more days to elapse, and then one morning, during his mid-day meal, he entered into conversation with the Peruvian, adroitly keeping the conversation as personal as possible, and leading the fellow on to talk about himself. It was an easy task that Jim had before him, as he very soon found. He sympathised with

the man in all his little troubles, and advised him what to do to make matters easier for himself, the consequence being that Douglas passed the whole afternoon sitting down and talking with the soldier, with the result that by the evening the two were as friendly together as even Jim could wish.

The Peruvian Government, it now appeared, was in the habit of giving the prisoners a small bonus for every cubic yard of rubble or ore that was removed above a certain fixed quantity, and this bonus Jim laid himself out to earn, with the result that he very soon had a nice little hoard of *pesetas*, which he laid out on such comforts as the village provided. He also took care to keep his gaoler well supplied with *cigarillos*, which proved the best prescription for keeping him in a good temper. So that by the time that three months had slipped by, the man had ceased to keep guard over his prisoner at all, and left him to excavate the tunnel unwatched, while he himself sat down on the shady side of a rock to enjoy his tobacco. Things were now indeed shaping very well for Jim, and having lulled his gaoler's suspicions, the young man next set about getting together a small store of provisions, which he secreted little by little behind a great boulder which he found about fifty feet inside the mouth of the tunnel, and a month later he had accumulated what he considered to be enough provender to last him, with care, until he could reach either the sea-coast or the nearest Chilian outpost, which at that time was lying somewhere near Caraguara.

The next thing, he told himself, was to wait for a favourable opportunity to escape ; and while waiting he put all his energies into his work, so that he might have as much money as possible when the time came for him to make his attempt. It was quite the usual thing now for the guard—

whose name, Jim had ascertained, was Carbajal—to lie down behind his rock, and either sleep or smoke while his charge laboured in the tunnel; and one day Jim crawled over to the rock where he lay and took a good look at the fellow. He was sitting with his back against the rock, fast asleep; his rifle was lying about three feet away from him, and his peaked cap was tilted over his eyes. If he would only go to sleep like that in the morning, thought Jim, all would be well; for the escape would have to be made very early in order that the fugitive might get a good long start before his absence was discovered when the roll was called at nightfall.

Douglas had now quite a nice little stock of money, and he soon made up his mind what to do. One evening, before going to the sleeping barracks, he bought a bottle of *aguardiente*, and from an *Indio* with whom he had made friends he procured a large quantity of *coca* leaves, which he put into the bottle of spirit to soak overnight, knowing that by the morning the strong liquor would have absorbed all the cocaine out of the leaves.

The next morning he extracted all the leaves and recorked the bottle, which he carefully secreted under his coat, for he had determined to make his escape that very day. Then he went up to the tunnel, followed by the guard, who lay down behind his usual rock directly they arrived at the works. Jim considered for a few seconds whether he should offer the man the bottle at once or later, and finally determined in favour of the latter, in order to avoid arousing his guard's suspicions, and to give him an opportunity to get thoroughly thirsty in the hot sun. Jim then went into the tunnel and walked down to its far end, not to work, however, for he determined to save himself up as much as possible, in view of future contingencies.

He therefore sat down, with his back against one of the tunnel walls, but would not close his eyes lest he should inadvertently drop off to sleep. He had been staring abstractedly at the opposite wall for some minutes, when it dawned upon him that one of the blocks of stone of which it was composed had a very curiously symmetrical appearance, and the longer he gazed at it the more convinced did he become that the slab was not nature's handiwork at all, but that of man. In a moment all sorts of legends vaguely flashed through his mind, and, knowing that this tunnel had been originally used by the Incas and had not been opened since, he began to wonder whether the curious circumstance was worth investigating. He soon decided that it was, and seizing his pick, he inserted the point at the edge of the slab, and attempted to lever the stone away. It resisted for so long, however, that he was beginning to think the stone was after all no more than a part of the natural rock, when, under a more than usually vigorous pull, he saw it move forward slightly.

He now wrenched at it more determinedly than ever, and in a few seconds had the satisfaction of seeing the heavy slab totter and then fall outward on to the floor of the tunnel. Douglas was provided with matches and a lantern for the purposes of his work, and he lost no time in exploring the cavity which the stone had disclosed. With eager fingers he searched and probed about, but for some time found nothing. Then his hand suddenly encountered something that felt metallic and heavy, and upon bringing it to the light, he found that he held in his hand a small golden image, some three inches high, evidently representing the god Rimac. This spurred him on to new efforts, and in a few minutes he had extracted five other little figures from the same place. Jim believed that he had now emptied

the cache, and he was on the point of abandoning further search, since time was flying, but was just feeling round the hole for the last time, when his hand came in contact with something else.

This last object which he brought to light proved to be nothing less than a roll of Inca paper, a coarse material made of the wool of the vicuña, which the priests were accustomed to use in keeping their records. This was probably a prize of considerably greater value than the gold, Jim thought, and he carefully opened it with trembling fingers. But, as he quite expected, he could make nothing of it, for it was written in the ancient Inca character, which few white men have ever seen, and which only a small number of Indians, directly descended from the ancient Peruvian race, are able to decipher. There was not much of it, but Douglas guessed that its value must be great, or it would not have been hidden so carefully away. He therefore folded it up carefully, and put it, together with the little gold figures, in his pocket, and then left the cave with his bottle of *aguardiente*, which he meant to present to Carbajal.

The fellow was already very nearly asleep, as it happened, and he was, moreover, very thirsty, consequently Jim's offer was accepted with almost indecent haste; as a matter of fact, Carbajal put the bottle to his lips the moment that Jim held it out to him, and he only removed it when it was nearly all gone.

"Ah! *señor*," sighed the soldier, as he wiped his lips, "that stuff was good—it always is good when one is thirsty, but—but what a curious flavour it has with it. Not that it is a disagreeable taste, mind you; indeed, I rather like it, but it is somewhat different from the stuff one usually gets here."

"Ah," replied Douglas, "I can see that you are unused to the taste of *aguardiente*. It is perhaps a long time since you tasted any? However, there is plenty more where that came from, so don't be chary of using it; besides, I can see that you are thirsty."

After having offered Jim a taste of the spirit, which he declined, much to Carbajal's satisfaction, that worthy again raised the bottle to his lips and finished the contents, flinging the empty bottle away as soon as he had done so. He then composed himself as comfortably as he could against the rock, tilted his cap over his eyes again, and, after a preliminary grunt or two, announced that he felt tired and wished to be left alone. Jim was not slow in taking the hint, but instead of returning to the tunnel, he took up a position from which he could watch his fatigued warder. He kept his eyes fixed on the fellow, and very soon had the satisfaction of seeing Carbajal fall over on his side, completely overcome by the potency of the drug with which the spirit had been doctored.

Jim at once left his hiding-place and crept cautiously forward, presently reaching Carbajal's side. Then he proceeded to shake him, lightly at first, and afterwards more vigorously, until he saw that nothing would wake him for at least a dozen hours. The next thing was to carry the man into the tunnel, and, once there, Douglas lost no time in stripping off the fellow's uniform and clothing himself therein. He then fastened on the leather belt, with its cartridge-pouch attached, and possessed himself of Carbajal's carbine.

This completed Jim's transformation; and he flattered himself that he could now be very easily mistaken for a Peruvian soldier, which was, of course, what he desired. He took one last look round the tunnel, felt in his pockets

to make sure that he had transferred to them the golden images and the document, as well as all his other belongings, and marched boldly out of the cavern.

“*Clang ! clang ! clang ! clang !*” At this moment there came rolling up from the village the sound of the alarm-bell, cutting sharply into Jim’s meditations, and he knew in a moment what had occurred. A perverse fate had prompted some prisoner to seize this precise moment in which to make a dash for liberty, and the alarm was being given. For a few seconds Jim hesitated, considering ; then, with a hurried look round, he started off down the hillside at full speed, leaping rocks, boulders, and everything else that came in his way. The soldiers were already pouring out of their barracks !

CHAPTER XVIII

Escaped !

THIS was indeed a sorry trick that fortune, that perverse jade, had played him, meditated Jim. The chances were, too, that the fugitive would take the same direction as Douglas himself, in which case they would probably both be captured. This thought gave wings to the young Englishman's feet, and he went bounding away down the hill like a startled deer, thinking of nothing but getting to cover as quickly as possible. But the unfortunate fact was that there was no place within at least a mile where a man could be concealed, and Jim knew well that long ere he could reach the strip of forest on which he was keeping his eye, he would be in full view of the pursuers should they happen to come that way, which was more than probable.

Stay, though ; were both fugitives taking the same direction ? There was not so much clamour perceptible now, and Jim pulled up suddenly to listen, at the same time looking back along the way by which he had come. For a few seconds dead silence reigned, and Jim was beginning to congratulate himself that the Chilian had taken another course, when round the corner of the hill he saw a figure emerge, flying along at a tremendous pace, and leaping

every obstacle that came in its way; a moment later he heard a renewed uproar of shouts and curses, and he observed that the other fugitive was heading directly for him, doubtless with the pursuers hard on his track.

Then, at this critical moment, an idea flashed through Jim's brain. He did not believe that the fugitive had yet caught sight of him, while the soldiers would not reach the corner for a few seconds, he hoped. Like a man shot, Jim flung himself prone on the ground, and commenced to crawl toward a large boulder which he had just caught sight of, and in less than half a minute he was ensconced behind a rock which was just big enough to afford concealment to one man, if that man had the sense to remain perfectly motionless. Then, stretching himself flat upon the ground, Jim cautiously peered round the edge of the boulder, in order to keep an eye upon the escaping prisoner, for a plan had come into his head which he thought might possibly be successful, and which was certainly the only one which offered any hope of his being able finally to get clear away.

Douglas had suddenly remembered that he was wearing a Peruvian soldier's uniform; and his idea was to allow the fugitive to pass him and then join in the chase, trusting to luck that the pursuers would mistake him for one of themselves. He would, of course, take care not to overtake the Chilian,—let the poor man get away if he could, by all means,—but he thought that if he could himself lead the pursuit, so to speak, he might be able gradually to outdistance the rest of the soldiers, and thus finally get clear away by allowing the Peruvians to imagine that he was still keeping up the pursuit. Should the man be caught, however, Jim trusted to being able to slip away unseen amid the excitement, especially if the capture should happen to

take place anywhere near that strip of forest country a mile or so ahead.

A very few seconds sufficed to show Jim that he had not been seen by the Chilian, and that the latter did not intend to avail himself of such an insecure hiding-place as the rock afforded, for he went dashing past at full speed, leaving Jim about a hundred yards to the left.

Just as the man fled by, his heavy gasps for breath sounding marvellously loud in the still air, the first of his pursuers put in an appearance round the corner of the hill, a quarter of a mile away, carrying his carbine at the trail ; and he was immediately followed by about a score more soldiers, who began to shout themselves hoarse as they came in sight of their quarry. Then several of the Peruvians pulled up, and, dropping on their knees, levelled their carbines and began to blaze away at the running man. Douglas prayed that the unhappy creature might not be hit, for if he were, it would bring the pursuit to an end in the precise spot where Jim could not possibly avoid being discovered ; but he need not have been alarmed ; the shooting was execrable, and the bullets flew everywhere but near the fugitive. Several of them flattened themselves against the face of the boulder behind which Douglas was lying, and one nearly blinded him with the dust which it threw up as it plugged into the earth just in front of his face.

The Peruvians did not keep up their target practice very long, for they found it impossible to hit the runner, and realised that he gained a lot of ground when they pulled up to fire. They therefore rose to their feet and dashed along in pursuit once more, only occasionally discharging their weapons pistol-wise in the hope of a lucky bullet finding its billet.

And now they were approaching the rock where Jim was

concealed; in a very few seconds he must be prepared to act, and to act quickly too. They evidently had no idea that a second prisoner was so close to them, for, to the young man's great relief, they were aiming to pass the rock at a distance of quite eighty yards. Closer and closer they came, and as they did so Jim gradually edged his way round the rock in such a manner as to keep out of their sight as far as was possible. Another moment's suspense and the leading soldier had passed the rock without giving it so much as a glance. Then another and another man panted past, until presently the rearmost Peruvian went grunting and gasping by.

In a second Jim had sprung to his feet and was scudding along in the wake of the rearmost soldier, at the same time edging away to the right of the rock in such a manner as to bring him directly behind the group of Peruvians. Then he put on the pace a little, and found that he could easily outrun any of the soldiers, since he himself was quite fresh while they were already somewhat winded. He soon overtook the last soldier, and began to pass him, his heart in his throat with apprehension lest the fellow should recognise him as one of the Chilean officers, and shout his discovery to the rest. But the fellow, although somewhat astonished to find that there had been a comrade behind while he thought that he himself was the rearmost man, paid little attention to his supposed comrade, being too much out of breath to do much thinking. Douglas passed him, unsuspected, and meanwhile kept his eye on the Chilean, who, although obviously failing in speed, was rapidly nearing the belt of forest.

Jim then put on another spurt, and passed a second soldier, then another, and still another, without attracting any particular attention to himself; and a few minutes

later he found that he was leading the entire party of pursuers. So far so good ; his back was now presented to them all, and they had therefore no opportunity to recognise his features ; yet while he ran he had a very unpleasant feeling that he might expect a bullet to strike him between his shoulder-blades at any moment. But the bullet did not come ; and he could tell, by the diminishing sounds of trampling feet that he was still steadily drawing ahead of the rest of the soldiers. At this moment the Chilian plunged into the thick brushwood, and was, in a few seconds, lost to sight, while a yell of angry disappointment and execration went up from the pursuing soldiery.

“Now,” muttered Douglas to himself, “if that fellow only knows what he is about, and keeps cool, he should be able to make his escape without much difficulty.” And he too plunged forward at top speed, in order that he also might get into the wood well in advance of the soldiers ; for his own chance of escape depended upon his being able to give his “comrades” the slip. A few seconds more, and Jim saw a small opening among the brushwood disclosing an Indian “bush-path” ; it was along this that the Chilian had gone, and Douglas now himself dashed into the wood, tearing his hands, face, and clothes on the sharp thorns with which the path was bordered.

Once inside the wood he was out of sight of the Peruvians ; and hope lent wings to his feet. He fairly flew along the narrow pathway until he felt he must soon catch up the Chilian, if the fellow were still ahead ; but, even when Jim came to a comparatively long length of straight path, he was unable to see any one, and he soon came to the conclusion that the man had, very wisely, slipped away into the thick undergrowth to wait until the pursuit had gone past and darkness should come on. Douglas re-

solved that he would do likewise, and increased his pace still more, so that he might be out of sight before the soldiers should enter the straight length of path, where, of course, they would be able to see some distance ahead. The Englishman was lucky in finding an opening in the thick wall of brushwood, and he plunged into the brake just a second before the pursuing soldiery came in sight, making a tremendous noise as he broke a way for himself, which he fervently trusted would not be heard amid the uproar that the Peruvians themselves were creating.

As soon as he had got about ten yards from the path he flung himself down at full length upon the ground, in a little open space which was clear of thorns, to recover his breath and listen to the sounds of the pursuit. At the same time he examined the breach of his carbine and, finding it empty, loaded it, wondering at the carelessness of the guard from whom he had so recently taken it. For a second or two the noise of the runners came nearer and nearer; and then, suddenly, there was a loud cry of "Halt!" followed by a terrific shouting and hubbub, the snapping of small branches, the crackling of undergrowth trodden down, and then—the report of a carbine.

"*Carrajo!*" muttered Jim, "they have sighted that unfortunate Chilian, then! I wonder how it was that I passed without seeing him? Poor beggar! I am afraid that they won't show him much mercy—nor me, either—if they catch me," he added.

But there was no more shooting, and from various parts of the wood men were heard calling to each other; so Jim surmised that it must have been a false alarm, and that the Chilian was still undiscovered. The soldiers were yet rather too far distant for Jim to hear what they were shouting to one another, but presently they approached near

enough for him to catch the words, and he found that they were inquiring of one another whether there were any signs of the fugitive, and whether "any one had seen that swift-running man who entered the wood first." The replies were to the effect that the *Chileño* had not yet been sighted, and that the "runner"—that was, of course, Jim himself—had also mysteriously vanished, but that the latter must be somewhere about, and that they would soon come across him.

Douglas was beginning to fear that the last part of the remark might very soon prove only too true, for it was evident that the Peruvians were slowly but surely working their way through the wood toward the place where he was concealed. Observing, therefore, that the undergrowth was fairly thin ahead of him, he started to crawl along so as, if possible, to get out of the course of the beaters before they should arrive on the spot. Grasping his carbine so that his hand covered the trigger-guard—in order to avoid any accidental discharge in consequence of the trigger becoming caught in some trailing twig—he began to creep forward, making as little noise as possible, and being particularly careful to avoid disturbing the bushes any more than he could help. The soldiers, luckily for him, kept up an incessant shouting, so that he was able to guess pretty well their relative positions ; and, after about five minutes' slow progress through the brushwood, he came to the conclusion that he had at last got out of their way. There was, too, a nice little open space wherein he could lie hidden without being in momentary fear of being bitten by a snake, a particularly deadly species of which was known to swarm in that locality.

By this time Jim had recovered his breath, and was eagerly awaiting the moment when it would be safe

to move, wondering whether or not he had better remain where he was until darkness set in, when he was dumb-founded to hear some one come crashing through the brake, apparently quite close by, and making straight toward him. It could not be the Chilean, for he would never be making all that disturbance—unless indeed he had gone mad under the stress of being hunted—so it must necessarily be a stray Peruvian soldier. Jim at once sprang to his feet and began to poke about among the bushes with the muzzle of his carbine, as though searching for somebody who might possibly be hidden among them, at the same time turning his back on the approaching man, who was still pushing his way through the bush and singing softly to himself as he came.

Presently the noise sounded very close indeed, then still closer, when suddenly it stopped altogether. Jim knew that the other had seen him, and was doubtless wondering what he was doing there; but he dared not turn round for fear of being recognised; so he continued to poke about among the bushes, as though unaware that any one was present. Then a rough voice, which Jim at once recognised as that of his old enemy, Captain Garcia-y-Garcia, broke the silence with an explosion of Spanish profanity and a desire to be informed why this particular unit of the forces should be thus wasting his time instead of joining in the pursuit of the fugitive.

Douglas at once realised that the captain must have come along some time after his men, and that he had probably only just entered the wood. He also realised that, directly he turned round, Garcia-y-Garcia would infallibly recognise him, in spite of the Peruvian private's uniform which he was wearing. He could also see, out of the tail of his eye, the glitter of a drawn sword which the

man carried in his hand. But it was necessary to act at once, for at any moment the fellow's suspicions might be aroused, or the soldiers might come back, or——

Like a flash Douglas wheeled round, bringing the carbine up to his hip as he did so, and looked the officer full in the face ; while his forefinger curled caressingly round the trigger. The captain's life hung by a thread, and he knew it, for he had recognised Jim as an escaped prisoner the moment that the latter showed his face.

“Ah !” gasped Garcia, his face turning ghastly white, “it is that scoundrel of an Englishman ! From whom have you stolen these clothes, señor ?” he went on, at the same time taking a fresh grip of his sword-hilt and moving slightly nearer to Douglas.

It was a lucky thing for Jim that he had never removed his eyes from those of Garcia, for he saw the murder that was lurking in them. Garcia was but trying to put him off his guard by asking that question, and Jim saw it. He had barely time to raise his carbine when the officer's sword flashed in the air and the next second would have smote full upon Douglas's head. But the young man caught the blow on the barrel of his weapon, turning the blade aside, and at the same instant he pushed the muzzle of the carbine into Garcia's face and pulled the trigger !

There was a sharp, ringing report, and the Peruvian fell backward among the bushes, with his head blown to pieces. Jim hastily pushed the corpse out of sight, reloaded his rifle, and then started to run as hard as he could ; for he knew that the explosion could not possibly pass unnoticed in that echoing wood ; and, indeed, he immediately heard a chorus of excited shouting coming from somewhere away on his left. He therefore picked up his heels and ran for his life. Luckily he came upon another path, running at

right angles to the main path, and into this he plunged, stripping off his long military overcoat as he ran. After running for about ten minutes, and getting thoroughly out of breath, he stopped to listen; and, to his great relief, found that all sounds had died away, and that the part of the wood where he found himself was as still as the grave.

He therefore pressed on again, but not so fast as before, and in half an hour's time he fancied that the wood was beginning to grow less dense, and that he was therefore coming to its boundary; but it proved to be only a large wind-gap in the forest, across which he made his way as quickly as possible, striking into a still denser part of the wood on the other side. It was by this time beginning to grow dark, and Jim was considering ruefully the prospect of having to spend the night in the forest when he thought he heard a slight noise somewhere among the trees near him. He at once brought his rifle to the "ready," and glared about him, searching the wood with his glances to see who or what the intruder might be. The next moment he sprang behind a tree; for it was certain that there was somebody close at hand. It could hardly be a Peruvian soldier so far away from his friends, thought Jim; moreover, the individual was treading stealthily, as though in fear of being heard. The next moment the fugitive Chilean pushed his way cautiously into the path, looking warily to right and left as he did so. Douglas immediately sprang out from his hiding-place, nearly scaring the man to death for a moment. The Chilean proved to be an officer who had formerly been on board the *O'Higgins*, and he and Douglas recognised each other instantly.

They at once sat down to talk matters over, and Jim soon found that his friend knew this part of the country very well, having been there before; and that he had

decided to make for Arica, which was at this time in Chilean hands. Jim readily fell in with the plan, and after a good long rest the two men started away upon their arduous journey. They camped for the night on the outskirts of the wood, which they reached about midnight, and there made a meal off the provisions which each had been thoughtful enough to bring. These provisions lasted them a week, by which time they were approaching the region where they might hope to find the Chilean outposts. But they had either miscalculated the distance, or the Chileans had retreated, for it was another week before they finally came into contact with a Chilean force at Tacna; and, meanwhile, they had had to procure food at the muzzle of Jim's carbine, for the country-folk soon perceived that the two fugitives were escaped Chilean prisoners.

As soon, however, as they fell in with Colonel Barros, in command of the first company of the Taltal regiment, stationed at Tacna, their troubles were over. He at once provided them with mules and a small escort, at the same time lending them as much money as he could spare. And after a stay of three days with this hospitable and kindly man they took their departure, arriving at Arica two days later; and there, before their eyes as they came in sight of the harbour, lay the *Blanco Encalada*, the Chilean flagship, a sight which Jim thought the finest that he had ever seen. The *O'Higgins* was there also, together with three other ships; and the two scarecrows lost no time in repairing on board their respective vessels.

Jim Douglas's reception on board was one which he will remember all his life. He was instantly shouldered by his brother officers and carried off to the ward-room, where he was made to detail all his adventures, the captain and admiral being at the moment ashore. It was nearly mid-

night before Jim had finished ; and, the admiral being still ashore, he retired to his bunk and slept the sleep of the utterly weary.

The next thing he knew was that he was being violently shaken, while a voice cried, "Rouse up, *amigo* ; rouse up ! The admiral has just come on board ; and, having been informed of your return, desires to see you immediately. Hurry up ! for I believe, from the look of the old gentleman, that he has something good in store for you. It's just nine o'clock, and he breakfasts in ten minutes ; so look sharp."

Jim did "look sharp." He dragged a uniform out of his chest, slipped it on, and in less than ten minutes was standing shaking hands with Admiral Riveros.

CHAPTER XIX

A Guerilla Stronghold

“*BUENAS dias, Señor Douglas,*” said the old gentleman heartily; “sit down and tell me all about yourself and your doings since the memorable night when you left the *Blanco Encalada*. I feared that you, with all the rest of the crew of the *Janequeo*, had perished in Callao harbour, or fallen into the hands of the Peruvians—which is even worse, so they tell me. I am indeed glad to see you back again, my young friend. Now proceed with your report, señor, if you please.”

Thus commanded, Jim plunged into a fairly full and detailed recital of all that had befallen him since he had left the flagship, only pausing in his narrative when Riveros wished to be enlightened upon some point or other. The admiral continually nodded approbation of what Douglas had done; and the lad noticed that he paid particular attention to the account of the silver mine at Sorata, and Jim’s description of the country thereabout. When the young Englishman had finished his report, which he did in the course of about an hour, Riveros suddenly said:

“Then I may take it, *Señor el Teniente*, that you are pretty well acquainted with the country about Sorata? Did you, by any chance, see or hear anything of a village

called Coroico during your captivity, or while you were escaping?"

"Coroico?" mused Jim; "let me see—yes, sir; I seem to remember hearing the place spoken of by a warder with whom I contrived to become friendly—the man whose uniform I took the small liberty of appropriating, you will remember. He said that a Bolivian force was collecting near there, for the purpose, I believe, of making raids into the newly acquired Chilean territory."

"Exactly! Just so," replied Riveros; "that is the matter in a nutshell. Now listen to me for a few moments, please. As you are aware, we have practically destroyed the naval power of Peru; and we have also made short work of her armies wherever we have come into contact with them. In a word, Peru is almost at the end of her resources; and the Government is ready to come to terms, allowing us to keep the territory we have newly acquired along the sea-coast, namely, that strip of land reaching, roughly, from Papos to Arica. So far, so good. A small portion of that territory, however, belonged to Bolivia, which is, as you know, the ally of Peru. Now, the Bolivian Government is also ready to surrender that land; but a large portion of the population will not hear of it being given up, since their only port, Antofagasta, is situated upon it. These—rebels, I suppose I may call them, are trying to displace the president of Bolivia in order to put in power a man who will not accede to the Chilean demands; but Dr. Ladislao Cabrera is too strong for the rebels, and still retains his office.

"Having therefore been foiled in that direction, a force of Bolivians has been collected by a noted guerilla leader named Bajos; and this force, amounting to about a couple of thousand men, has entrenched itself in a strong position

near Coroico, whence frequent destructive raids are being made into our newly won territory. They burn and slay wherever they go ; in fact they leave a trail of blood and ashes behind them plain enough for anybody to follow. Mercy seems a thing absolutely unknown among these desperadoes ; and instead of carrying on their warfare in a civilised manner, they are committing the most dreadful atrocities on all Chilians, both civil and military, who fall into their hands. Now, these men are a menace which we cannot tolerate ; for, unless the band is rooted out and utterly destroyed, there will never be peace or safety in the northern part of Chili. This has been a somewhat long introduction to what I have to say, *teniente*, but it was necessary, in view of the remarks which I am about to make.

“As I say, the work of the navy is practically finished ; but we are very short of men in the army ; for the army has to cover a large extent of country. I have therefore decided to transfer you from the navy to the army, and to send you, at the head of five hundred men, against these outlaws. You are acquainted with the country ; and you have always carried out most satisfactorily such work as I have given you to do. More than that number of men cannot, as I understand, be spared. Five hundred against two thousand is heavy odds, I admit ; but much will depend upon the man who is in charge of the smaller force ; and I have no hesitation in saying that I do not think I could have chosen a better man for the purpose than yourself.”

Jim bowed and murmured his thanks. “Now,” resumed Riveros, “the force is actually ready, and is waiting to start on its march. If you had not turned up in the nick of time I should have been obliged to send another man ; for this is a matter that cannot wait. Since you are here, however, I shall be glad if you will start for Coroico at once. I am

sorry to be obliged to send you away so soon, for you deserve a long rest after all that you have gone through ; but perhaps this commission as captain in the army which I have procured for you may be some slight recompense for what you have been obliged to endure. Should you bring this expedition to a satisfactory issue, I think I can promise that you will be raised to the rank of major. That is all, I think. And now, Señor Douglas, the sooner you get away the better. *Dios guarde al Usted !* Any further particulars which you may desire to know will be given you by Captain Simpson ; you will find him in his cabin. *A Dios, señor, à mas ver !* ”

The kindly but extremely busy old gentleman pushed Jim out of the cabin without giving him an opportunity to express the gratitude he felt for the promotion and the trust reposed in him, and he made his way at once to Simpson's cabin, in order to get all the information possible relative to the forthcoming expedition. When he emerged, an hour or so later, he was beaming with joy and pleasure-able anticipation ; for he found that the task was likely to be a very difficult one ; in consequence of which he had been provided with a squadron of the Guías cavalry, together with a couple of field-pieces, which Simpson had told him he would find very necessary. He quickly packed up his slender baggage, and, after saying good-bye to his comrades, had himself rowed ashore. There his first move was made to the establishment of a military tailor, where he procured his new uniform and weapons ; then he paid a visit to the cavalry barracks, selected a charger for himself, inspected his troop, and gave orders for them to be ready for an early start on the morrow. They were a fine-looking lot of men, and Jim felt that they were just the sort of fellows for an expedition of this kind.

The following morning at seven o'clock Douglas rode into the parade ground, and found his men already drawn up, together with the two field-pieces; and half an hour later the little army clattered out of the barrack-yard into the streets, past the *plaza*, out of the north gate, and swung into the road which led north-eastward toward Lake Titicaca, reaching La Paz four days after leaving Arica. They stayed here one day, leaving on the following morning, and by nightfall the force was at the foot of the mountains which they would have to traverse before reaching Sorata. Here they camped for the night, pushing forward the next day right into the heart of the mountains, which, at this altitude, were clothed with thick pine forests, and cut up by mountain torrents spanned by narrow and frail bridges, across which it was a very difficult and supremely dangerous task to transport the horses and the guns.

They had been among the mountains a week, and were approaching fairly close to Coroico; Jim therefore took the precaution to throw out scouts in all directions round his little force, in order to prevent surprise; and one evening, just before darkness began to settle down, one of the men came riding in to say that he had caught sight of a small body of Bolivians hovering among the hills about a mile to the right of the main body. "Evidently," thought the young commander, "the guerillas are expecting some such expedition as this, and have thrown out their outposts; there will therefore be little hope of taking them by surprise." However, as there was no further alarm, and as darkness was fast closing down, orders were given for the camp to be pitched for the night; and very soon the horses were picketed and the men were under canvas, sentries were posted, and everything was made snug and comfortable for the night.

About nine o'clock, feeling greatly fatigued, Jim turned

into his tent, and, wrapping himself in his heavy overcoat, threw himself down on the ground, determined to get to sleep early that he might feel fresh and fit for the next morning, when they might reasonably expect to get into touch with the enemy. But try as he might, and tired as he was, sleep refused to visit him, and the harder he tried the wider awake did he become. He also found that he was rapidly becoming obsessed by a horrible feeling that all was not right, that there was some unknown but terrible danger hovering over the sleeping camp. He strove to dispossess his mind of such fancies by assuring himself that sentries were posted everywhere, and that therefore the camp would be early alarmed in the event of an attack being made ; but it was all to no purpose ; the presentiment only held him the more firmly in its embrace. He had just looked at his watch and discovered that it was midnight, and that he had been tossing and tumbling for three hours, when his ears caught a very faint sound, coming apparently from some distance away.

Douglas sprang to his feet in a moment, and striding to the flap of his tent, bent all his energies to the task of listening intently. Yes, there it was again ! It was coming from the direction of a wooden suspension bridge which spanned a broad ravine, and which the force had crossed about a quarter of an hour before camping down ; and it took the form of heavy, muffled blows of iron against wood.

“Hallo !” exclaimed Douglas, “there is something wrong here ! but what are the sentries doing ?”

In a second he had belted on his sword and revolver, and plunged out of the tent in the direction from which the sound was coming, and a few minutes later arrived at the place where the sentry should have been standing ; but there was no sign of the man—he was nowhere to be seen.

"*Caramba!*" exclaimed Jim, "I believe there has been foul play here!" and he began to hunt about among the undergrowth for some sign of the missing man. The next moment he stumbled over something soft, and fell upon his knees, putting out his hands to save himself. They came in contact with a rough overcoat, and in an instant Jim knew it for that of the sentry. Somewhat incautiously Jim struck a match, and saw at once what had happened to the poor fellow; he had been murdered by having a dagger driven between his shoulders!

"By Jove!" gasped the Englishman, "there has been foul treachery here. Aha!" he continued, starting to his feet, "what is *that*?"

His exclamation was occasioned by a sudden booming crash coming from the direction of the suspension bridge over which his force had passed before camping, and, with a sense of imminent disaster clutching at his heart, he dashed forward in the direction of the chasm, leaving the sentry to the tender mercies of the vultures. Jim came in sight of the bridge—or, rather, its remains—a few seconds later, and saw at once what had happened. The dull, chopping noise which had first attracted his attention had been caused by axe-strokes, and the bridge had been cut through from the farther side, allowing it to fall into the ravine. In a moment the significance of the occurrence flashed into Douglas's mind. What if the place whereon they were camped should prove to be a sort of island between the ravines? And suppose the farther bridge, their only way of escape, should also have been destroyed?

Like a hare Jim doubled on his tracks and fled back to the camp, which he found already alarmed by the noise of the falling bridge, and a few seconds sufficed to warn the men of what had occurred, and to arouse in them a sense

of imminent peril. Horses were saddled, bugles rang out, tents were struck, the guns limbered up, and in ten minutes the force was dashing along at top speed toward the next bridge, which they now realised could not be very far away.

As they galloped, Jim suddenly caught the sound of chopping in the distance ahead, and he urged his men to greater speed, the column sweeping along over the rough ground like a whirlwind. And they were only just in time! Round a bend in the road Douglas caught sight of a score of flickering lights, and saw another ravine looming dim and black in the semi-darkness. Were they in time? Was the bridge still intact? wondered the Englishman.

"Halt! HALT!" he yelled; "halt, for your lives!"

With a clatter and scraping of hoofs, a chorus of hoarse shouts, and a terrific whirl of dust, the troopers pulled up, and Jim saw on the opposite edge of the cleft a party of Bolivian guerillas hacking furiously away with axes at the bridge.

"Forward with the guns!" was now the word, and a few seconds later the two field-pieces were dragged to the front and fire opened on the outlaws, to which they replied with a furious fusillade of rifle bullets, several of the Chilean cavalry falling under that murderous fire. But Jim now ordered the guns to be loaded with canister shot instead of solid, and the guerillas were unable to face that storm of missiles. The men with the axes dropped their tools and took to their heels into the forest—those of them who were unwounded, that is to say—while the greater part fell dead and dying into the ravine. Then gradually the riflemen themselves retreated, keeping up a galling fire the whole time; and, from their evident reluctance to retire, Douglas guessed that they must have a strong reinforcement somewhere close at hand.

There was therefore no time to be lost if they were to get across unmolested, and Jim was himself the first to go over to the other side and examine the bridge, to see whether it was still in a condition to bear the passage of the horses and guns. Luckily, the guerillas had only just begun operations upon the structure, and it was hardly weakened at all ; he therefore gave the signal to his men on the opposite side, and in half an hour the whole force was safely across. But it was quite evident that they were in a very perilous situation and completely surrounded by Bolivians. Jim therefore called a council of war, composed of his officers, the result of which was a unanimous decision to press forward at all hazards and strike a paralysing blow at the guerillas before they were fully prepared for it, if possible. Jim's force could not be very far away now from the Bolivian stronghold ; indeed, they might come upon it at any moment, for the gigantic peak of Sorata was well in sight, and Jim took his bearings from that.

Forward they pressed, therefore, going as fast as their horses could carry them over the rough, rock-encumbered ground, and taking care to keep scouts thrown out all round the main body. But, strangely enough, they saw no further signs of the outlaws, and Jim was beginning to wonder where the force that was trying to destroy the bridge could have hidden itself, when, away in the distance ahead, he heard a piercing shriek of intense agony. There was then a pause of a few seconds, but immediately afterwards scream after scream went wailing up into the air ! Jim clenched his teeth and drove the spurs into his horse, crying, as he did so : " Follow me, half a dozen of you ; there is some more foul work going on ahead of us ! "

Six men immediately spurred their horses out of the press and followed Jim at full speed, the little squad of

men experiencing no difficulty in finding the direction in which to go, for the piercing shrieks were now becoming incessant. After five minutes or so of hard riding, Jim came within sight of a ruddy glare of light shining ahead among the trees, and he at once guessed what was going forward. Almost directly afterwards the seven horsemen burst into an open glade, at the far end of which was gathered a group of men, who immediately fled into the thick brushwood at the approach of the cavalry; not, however, before Jim had caught sight of their uniforms, which were those worn by the Bolivian guerillas. At the end of the clearing a large fire had been built in the form of a circle, in the centre of which stood a stout wooden stake driven into the earth, and to this stake was lashed an Indian who, poor creature, was being slowly roasted to death.

Jim and his men threw themselves from their horses, and, drawing their swords, promptly began to clear away the burning wood with their blades; and the moment that the circle was broken, Jim dashed through the opening, cut the ropes which bound the wretched Indian to the stake, and carried him out into the open, where the poor creature was laid down on the ground and given a canteen of water, which he drained eagerly, immediately begging for more. This was given him, and Douglas proceeded to examine his injuries just as the Chilian main body rode up. To his satisfaction, Jim found that the man was suffering from nothing more serious than a severe scorching, and he guessed that it must have been the anticipation of torture which had made the Indian send up those heartrending screams. As soon as the poor wretch had recovered from the shock which he had sustained, Jim questioned him as to how he came to be in such a situation, and was told that the man, whose name, by the way, was

José, had been a guide in the guerilla service. The Bolivians believed that it was impossible for anybody to find the way to their stronghold unassisted, and therefore, as soon as the Chilian cavalry appeared, they had suspected treachery on the part of somebody, their suspicion focussing itself in this case upon the unfortunate José. They had therefore put him to the torture, partly as punishment, and partly to make him disclose the strength of the attacking force, which the guerillas averred he must certainly know, since there was no doubt that he had been in communication with it. It was useless, said the Indian, for him to assert his innocence and his inability to supply the information required; he was simply not believed, or perhaps it was that the Bolivians were glad of an excuse for exercising their cruel instincts. The latter, thought Jim, was the more likely cause. José, having finished the recital of his adventure, now flung himself at Douglas's feet, praying that *el señor capitán* would not abandon him in this place, where he would certainly be again captured, but that "His Excellency" would take him into his service. If he would but do that, José averred he would be a faithful and true servant to his rescuer for the remainder of his life: he would ask no reward for his services; he would only ask to be allowed to be near Jim—to be his own private body-guard, and, in short, to do everything that he possibly could to show his gratitude for his timely deliverance.

Jim listened in silence to this outburst, and then somewhat inconsequently inquired: "Do you know whereabouts this guerilla fort is situated, José?"

"Yes, señor, I do," replied the man; "it is not more than a mile away from here, and I can lead you to the place by way of a road which the Bolivians would never suspect you of knowing."

“Then,” said Jim, “I will take you into the Chilian service as a guide, and you can be my own personal servant as well, if you choose. Only be careful that you play no tricks with me, or I will hang you from the nearest tree. Now, I think you are well enough to walk, are you not? Yes; very well, then; lead the way, José, to this road of which you speak; the sooner we root out this nest of rebels and outlaws the better!”

José did not, as Jim had expected, burst into a torrent of protestations of fidelity; he simply bowed his head and placed the young Englishman’s hand upon it, in token of submission, and then said quietly:

“If, Excellency, you will follow me, and also give orders for your men to ride as silently as possible, I will lead you, undiscovered, to the fort in less than half an hour. The road is not very good, it is true; but everything has been prepared for your reception at the other approach, and I can tell you that you would never have stormed the stronghold had you gone by that route.”

All being now in readiness, the men again mounted, and, with the Indian walking in front, swung away to the right, finding themselves in a few minutes upon a rough but wide road traversing the edge of a ravine, the inner side of the path being bounded by a high cliff which leaned outward until its top edge actually overhung the chasm, so that it was impossible for any one at the top to molest a force passing along the road by hurling rocks down upon it. As the Indian had remarked, the road was undoubtedly rough; they could not therefore get along very rapidly; but the half-hour had not quite expired when José laid his finger on his lips and held up his hand as a sign for the troop to halt.

“Now, *mi libertador*,” said the man, “we have managed

to make the journey undetected. The fort is round the bend which you see in the road, and lies among the brush-wood a little to the left of it. There is a broad slope leading up from the road to a gate in the fort which is small and very seldom used. The guerillas will not expect an attack from that quarter, for they are looking for you to approach from the opposite direction. Horses will be of little or no use for the attack ; but if you can run up your guns, you will be able to blow in the small gate and rush into the fort over its ruins before the Bolivianõs can offer any resistance."

Jim accordingly dismounted his men, telling them, however, to take their carbines with them ; and the horses were hobbled. The guns were then unlimbered and loaded, when the pieces were dragged quietly along the road by the men ; and presently the whole force drew up, just out of sight of the fort, ready to make their rush as soon as Douglas gave the signal. This he did by waving his sword, so as to obviate the necessity for shouting a command, and then swiftly the men swept out beyond the concealment of the cliff into the open space fronting the fort, dragging the field-pieces with them, which were immediately levelled at the gate and fired.

When the Chilians dashed into view, there was a sentry on the roof of the fort, and he immediately squibbed off his rifle ; but the alarm was given too late ; the report of his rifle was drowned in the roar of the guns, and the splintering and rending of the fort gate was the first intimation afforded the guerillas that the enemy was upon them—from a different quarter from that whence he was expected. Over the ruined gates dashed the Chilians, discharging their carbines as they went, and as they entered the fort they threw down their rifles and drew their sabres.

Then began a fight most grim and terrible. The Bolivians outnumbered their assailants by about four to one, but the latter had the advantage of a complete surprise, and they mowed down the savage guerillas by the score. There was a passage leading from the gate to the interior of the fort, but this was soon very nearly choked with dead and wounded. Jim therefore rallied his men for another charge before the way should be quite closed, and, with a cheer, his brave fellows forced a passage through for themselves, cutting down all who opposed them. So completely were the outlaws taken by surprise that many of them had not found time to arm themselves, and were therefore slaughtered like so many sheep. The promise of success, on the other hand, spurred the Chileans on to still further effort, and in another ten minutes they had struck such terror into the hearts of the defenders of the stronghold that the guerillas flung down their arms and cried for quarter; and thus at last the tide of death was stopped.

The guerillas were then disarmed and imprisoned in batches in the prison cells which they had so carefully prepared for others, while their arms were collected and destroyed, and the fort was in the hands of the Chileans. The terror of the surrounding country had been brought to nothing at last, and there would be no more savage raids and midnight massacres.

A messenger was at once dispatched to La Paz to acquaint the Government with the fact of the capture and downfall of the guerilla band, with a request that a body of Bolivian troops might be dispatched to take charge of the prisoners. Jim determined, however, not to hand over the fort, although it was situated in Bolivian territory, until he should receive definite instructions so to do from

headquarters ; for he did not know what new boundaries Chili proposed to arrange as the limits to the country which she had acquired by conquest from the two republics ; and he thought it more than probable that his Government would decide to retain the fort, since it occupied such a very commanding position.

He therefore in due time handed over the eight hundred prisoners—the rest of the band having been killed—to the Bolivian troops ; who immediately returned with them to La Paz. Meanwhile Jim repaired the fort sufficiently to provide accommodation for his own troops, with whom he temporarily garrisoned the place. Then he sent a messenger on horseback to Arica to report the success which had been obtained, and to ask for instructions as to what he was to do with the fort.

Meanwhile the young Englishman made up his mind that he was in for at least a fortnight's sojourn in the fort, or until such time as his messenger should return from Arica ; and he began to cast about for some means by which to while the time away.

CHAPTER XX

The Fulfilment of the Prophecy

“WELL, José, what do you make of it, eh? Why, surely, man, there is nothing in it to frighten you, is there?”

So spoke Jim Douglas to his Indian guide one morning, three or four days after the messenger had been dispatched to Arica. The Englishman had found the time hanging somewhat heavily on his hands up there in that lonely mountain fortress; and therefore, having nothing better to do, he had brought out the roll of parchment which he had found in the tunnel at Sorata, and had set himself to the task of deciphering its meaning. Failing entirely, however, to make any sense out of it, yet somehow convinced that the document was of some importance, he had called José into the tent and asked him whether his knowledge of the various native dialects was sufficient to enable him to translate it.

The effect of the sight of the document upon José had been peculiar, to say the least of it. The moment that his eyes had fallen upon the parchment, his face had turned that peculiar greyish tint which a dark skin takes on in lieu of pallor; his hands had trembled with excitement or some other emotion, and his whole demeanour had been so strange as to call forth the exclamation from Jim above recorded.

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The Indian made no reply for several seconds, but sat gazing at the document with eyes that seemed to threaten every moment to start out of his head. Then he turned the parchment over and over in his hands, holding it tenderly, even reverently, as though it were some extremely precious or sacred thing. Finally he pulled himself together, and, in a voice trembling with emotion, replied: "No—o, señor; there is nothing in this document to frighten me, but—but——. You have no idea at all, señor," he continued, after a lengthy pause, "what this writing refers to?"

"No, of course I have not," answered Douglas, somewhat impatiently. "If I knew the contents I should not be under the necessity to ask you to translate them, should I?"

"Pardon me, señor; I spoke foolishly," replied José. "Let the señor, however, listen to me while I recount a few facts to him. He will then see, perhaps, why I have been so utterly astonished at the sight of this document. Long ages ago—ay, long before the *conquistadores* appeared in Peru—we Indians worked the silver and gold mines, which, as you know, abound in this country; and we also gathered enormous quantities of precious stones from the river-beds for the purpose of adorning the person of the Inca, our lord, and those of his nobles whom he deigned to favour, as well as for the adornment of the temple and of the royal palace. By the time, then, that Pizarro and his horde of robbers overran the land, there were millions upon millions of dollars-worth of precious metals and precious stones in the possession of the Inca and his nobles. You have heard of the ransom which Pizarro exacted from Atahualpa; how a large room was twice filled with gold, to the value of fifteen millions of your pounds? Well, the Spaniards

themselves knew that that ransom was but a small fraction of the enormous wealth which we Peruvians possessed ; but they did *not* know, as we did, how very small a fraction it was. We had not time enough to secrete all our treasure, for the arrival of the Spaniards was unexpected ; but we hid away an enormous quantity of gold, silver, and jewels. Some of it has been lost ; irretrievably, I fear, through the sudden death of the men to whom the secret of its hiding-place had been entrusted. But we Peruvians still know the whereabouts of a good deal of that vast hoard which is being kept for the time when a new Inca shall arise who shall set himself at the head of our armies and sweep the invaders of our land into the sea. All our preparations are made ; we only await the arrival of the man. And this document, into possession of which you have so strangely come, relates to the burial of one of these hoards, and tells the secret of its hiding-place, as also the means whereby that hiding-place may be found.

“That is why I was so greatly overcome with amazement when you showed me the paper, señor. *I* am one of the descendants of the ancient Peruvian race ; and, since this document is written in the secret character used by the Incas, I can read it, and I can say, now, where this treasure is located !”

“Phew !” whistled Jim, “that’s a strange story, and no mistake. I did not think when I brought that document away that it would prove of quite so much importance and value ; although, to be sure, there were several small gold and silver images buried with it.”

“Images !” ejaculated José excitedly ; “where are they, where are they, oh, my preserver ? If you really have the signs in your possession, then I—— Show me them, señor, show me them, I pray you.”

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Thus exhorted, Jim dived into the chest which he had brought with him to accommodate his belongings, and produced the little images which he had found in the tunnel at Sorata. José fell upon his knees before them in a perfect ecstasy of mingled reverence and delight, turning them over and over in his hands, and speaking to them as though they were, in very truth, alive. Then presently he recovered himself and, placing Jim's hand upon his head in token of submission, he said in a trembling voice :

“Oh, my deliverer, it was prophesied of old that the man who possessed those figures should also possess the treasure ; for that man would be destined to do great things for the benefit of our race. But in addition to this, you have found the document ; there can be no doubt, therefore, that you, my master, are the man who is destined to receive this great treasure, for all the signs point that way. I am willing, therefore, to translate this writing to you, señor, and to show you the way to the place where the treasure is hidden, so that you may obtain possession of it.”

“By Jove !” exclaimed Douglas, leaning back in his chair and wiping his forehead, “this is the most extraordinary affair that I have ever come across ; and—let me think ! what was it that old Inca witch-woman told me about treasure being in store for me ? Ah yes ! I remember. She said that one day I should come into possession of great wealth ; that it was still hidden in the ground, but that the secret of its hiding-place should one day be revealed to me. *Caramba !* It really seems as though the Inca's prophecy is about to come true. Now, José,” he went on, aloud ; “this is a very curious tale indeed. I hope you are not playing any tricks with me.

“Señor, you saved my life, only a few days ago,” replied the Indian ; “is it likely that I should deceive the man who

rescued me from a horrible death? Besides, the treasure is situated only a very short distance from here—about a day's journey—so your Excellency can easily prove whether I am telling the truth or not by accompanying me to the place, and seeing the treasure with your own eyes."

"H'm!" said Jim, "yes; that is of course the most satisfactory way of proving the matter. My messenger cannot possibly return for eight or ten days yet, so I should have plenty of time to make the journey. I can leave the fort in charge of Lieutenant Muñoz, as there is really nothing in the way of duty to keep me here. Yes, I think that will be best. Very well, José," continued the Englishman, "we will start early to-morrow morning; and you shall show me the way to this wonderful treasure-house of which you speak. You had better not talk too much, however, about the matter whereon we shall be engaged; for there is no need to excite an undue amount of curiosity about our movements. Make all the necessary preparations to-day,—you will of course know what we ought to take with us for the expedition,—and I will let it be understood that I am setting out for a hunt of two or three days' duration. We can make an early start, travel during the day, encamp on the spot for the night, and start work on the second day, returning here on the third. That ought to give us enough time to do what we have to do, ought it not?"

"Plenty of time, Excellency," returned the Indian. "And the señor need not be afraid that I shall disclose the secret of our journey. You had better take a rifle with you, señor, and let me take one, too; for it is just possible that we might be obliged to defend the treasure after we have secured it."

José then went away to make his preparations, while Jim remained in his tent thinking over the very curious

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train of incidents which had led up to that of this morning. Later in the day he sent for Muñoz and handed the command over to the lieutenant during his absence, giving him instructions how to act in any eventuality which was in the least likely to arise; and the next morning, just before daybreak, he set off in company with the Indian for the spot where the Inca's treasure was asserted to be concealed. Two mules had been loaded with provisions, a tent, cooking utensils, blankets, etc., and in the middle of the blankets had been concealed a couple of picks and the same number of shovels. Jim and the Indian each carried an ordinary army rifle slung over his shoulder, and had a bandolier of cartridges strapped round his waist, so that they were well prepared for whatever might befall.

The treasure was buried, said José, in a cave in the side of a ravine, at a spot about twenty miles north-eastward of Coroico, and the road thither was a difficult and dangerous one to travel, consisting as it did, for the most part, of a narrow path just wide enough for one man—or a mule—to pass, and skirting the edge of tremendous abysses whose bottoms could not be seen because of the mists which veiled them. Many a time they came to portions of the cliff-path which were so narrow that Jim thought it would be impossible to get any farther, but they managed it somehow; the mules stepping along as though they had been used to that kind of road all their lives, as, indeed, they very probably had. For some hours the two treasure-seekers continued to ascend, the scenery growing more and more gloomy, and the country more and more barren, until, at mid-day, they reached the summit of the pass and began to descend. Then the character of the scenery rapidly changed; they left the region of bare rock and entered upon that of the forests, leaving that in turn for the lower lands and the

region of tropical foliage, with deep ravines crossed by frail bridges made of rattan and light branches.

It was just becoming dusk when José threw up his hand as a sign for the little cavalcade to halt. He then took a careful look round him, observing the formation and appearance of the surrounding country; then he made a long and close scrutiny of the document, which they had, of course, brought with them, and a frown of perplexity made its appearance between José's eyes.

"What's the matter, *mi amigo*?" demanded Jim, noticing the look.

"Well, señor," replied José, "this paper says that from here one should be able to see, close at hand, a large pinnacle of rock in the shape of a pyramid. It is from that pinnacle that the bearings of the treasure cave are to be taken and—and I can see no such rock anywhere about here."

"That is awkward," said Douglas. "Does the paper say whether it was a big or small column of rock?"

"It says that it is about the height of two men, Excellency," replied the Indian.

"Oh, then, we may very easily find it hidden away somewhere among this thick brushwood," replied Jim. And sure enough, they found the rock, after an hour's search, during which it had become almost dark, completely covered with a thick growth of tropical foliage. They were able to do nothing further that night, the light having completely gone by the time that the rock was finally identified; so they camped out where they were, and began the search again the next morning.

From the rock José now carefully paced off certain distances; and, by ten o'clock in the forenoon he announced that he had discovered the spot where the treasure lay.

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At their feet ran a stream, the approach to which had been made by way of a gentle grassy slope. But the opposite side of the torrent was nothing more than a sheer wall of rock some hundreds of feet in height, and it seemed to Jim as though they had reached the uttermost confines of the world. They had come so far, but it was manifestly impossible to go any farther. However, it was not necessary to do so ; for, on the opposite side of the stream Jim saw, when José pointed it out to him, a black, round opening which, said the Indian, was the mouth of the treasure cavern.

Douglas thought that it would have been impossible to secure a better hiding-place ; for the approach to the spot was difficult, and beset with many dangers. And had any one arrived at the bank of the stream whereon the two men then stood they would never have guessed that the little inconspicuous hole on the opposite side was the entrance to a chamber wherein was contained the ransom of, not of one, but many kings.

The stream, though swift-flowing, was shallow, and the adventurers had little difficulty in getting across ; whereupon they found themselves standing on a narrow ledge of black rock, while, four feet above their heads, was the lower edge of the hole, which proved to be much larger than it had appeared from the other side. It was the work of a few seconds only for Jim to mount on the Indian's shoulders and secure a foothold in the mouth of the cave, after which he assisted José to climb up.

As soon as they were inside, José seemed to be overcome with awe at the idea of standing on such sacred ground ; but Jim had no such feelings, and kindling a torch, he bade the Indian lead the way. The latter soon recovered his equanimity, and, after they had hauled up

the picks and shovels, led the way into the interior of the cave, which widened out as they receded from the entrance, until it assumed enormous dimensions, the light of the torch being quite insufficient to disclose the boundaries of the cavern. And now they began to meet with traces of a former civilisation. Along the rock walls were ranged stone images of the Incas and their wives, and at the feet of each figure was to be seen a large package wrapped in raw-hide, and secured with strips of the same material. These packages, José said, contained gold bricks ; and Jim quickly proved the truth of the statement by slitting open one or two with his hunting-knife.

It was, however, toward a row of huge chests, ten in number, that the Indian led Jim, telling him that the real treasure was contained in them. Although strong, they were quickly broken open by well-directed blows of the pickaxes ; and upon the lids being raised there burst upon Jim's eyes such a vision of wealth that he was positively dazed by the immensity of it. The particular chest which he opened was full, from bottom to top, of solid gold ingots, black with age on the surface, but showing the dull red metallic lustre of gold when scraped with a knife. There must have been half a million pounds' worth of it, Jim guessed, in that one chest alone—and there were nine others ! The two men then opened a second box, at random, and this chest contained all manner of gold and silver ornaments, of the most exquisitely delicate and intricate workmanship. Cups, necklaces, finger-rings, clasps, sword-hilts, and breast-plates, the latter studded with rough, uncut jewels of enormous size, filled the chest to the very brim, and took away Jim's breath with the magnificence and lavish abundance of it all. The other cases were each opened in turn, disclosing to their astounded

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eyes the veritable treasure of the Incas; and Jim immediately saw that the removal of such a vast accumulation of wealth must necessarily occupy a considerable time, and that the treasure would have to be conveyed away piecemeal on mule-back. He therefore selected from the hoard of uncut jewels as many of the finest as he believed that he and José could conveniently carry, wrapped them up in two parcels, and, giving one to José to carry, took charge of the other himself. This done, the two men closed up the chests and left the cavern, returning to the spot where they had camped on the previous night.

During the long silent hours while José was asleep, Jim kept guard over the spoil which he had already secured, and made plans for removing the rest of the treasure. He decided to dispose of the whole of the jewels—or, rather, as many of them as he might find necessary—and with the money thus obtained fit out an expedition to the cavern, to bring away the remainder of the spoil; but while he was wondering how he could elude the watchfulness of the Bolivian authorities—who would pounce upon the whole if they should get to hear of its existence—he fell asleep, and it was nearly eleven o'clock when he awoke the next morning.

The two men then secured the gems to their persons, and started off on their toilsome journey back to the fort, which they safely reached two days later, utterly worn out with the fatigues which they had undergone. Jim was so completely exhausted that he spent the whole of the day after their return upon his narrow camp-bed; but by the following morning he was quite rested, and burning with impatience for his messenger to return, so that he might the sooner get back to civilisation and prepare for the expedition to the treasure-cavern.

It was some days, however, before the soldier returned,

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having ridden hard night and day to deliver Jim's report and to return with orders to the young commander. They were to the effect that Douglas was to leave half his force in the fort—which the Chilians had decided to hold for the present—and to return with the remaining half to Arica as soon as possible. He therefore set off with his reduced company upon the following morning, José insisting upon accompanying him, and reached Arica a week later, reporting his arrival at the military headquarters there, where he was complimented upon the success with which he had carried out his little campaign against the guerillas, and where he received his promotion to the rank of major, as had been promised him by Admiral Riveros in the event of his bringing the expedition to a satisfactory conclusion.

There is very little more to tell, for by the time that Douglas returned to Arica the war was practically over, and as peace negotiations were already in progress hostilities had ceased almost everywhere. A fortnight later the treaty was signed whereby Bolivia ceded the whole of her sea-coast to Chili, and Peru was forced to give up 250 miles of hers to the conquering Republic. The Peruvian navy had been utterly destroyed, with the exception of one or two worthless ships; the Bolivian armies had been cut to pieces, and the allies had been obliged to bow the knee to Chili, which had everywhere been victorious.

As the fighting was now all over Jim resigned his position in the Chilian army and went to Valparaiso, where he eventually disposed of his jewels for the very handsome sum of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, which was very much more than he had any idea they would fetch, yet considerably less than they were actually worth. He then made a journey into the mountains, accompanied only by José and a small escort, in order properly to survey the

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place where the treasure-cave was situated before he led the expedition there for the purpose of recovering the remainder of the gold and jewels. But to his utter consternation he found, when he reached the locality, that an earthquake had recently occurred which had changed the whole character of the surroundings!

He was, however, at length able to locate the spot where the cavern had been, and he took such elaborate and complete bearings of it that he felt sure he would one day, when things had quieted down a little, be able to get at the chests again and despoil them of their contents. But for the moment he had as much money as he actually needed; so, returning from Coroico, he bought an estate in a lovely spot near Quinteros Bay, and settled down comfortably there, with José as his faithful henchman.

Jim has never married, although he is now getting somewhat on in years. He says he is quite contented and happy with his horses, his dogs, and José, who has never left his master's side for a whole day since that eventful night when Jim rescued him from the guerillas.

For ten long years Jim lived in that house near Quinteros, which he named "Casa Coroico"; and then the Chilian revolutionary war broke out, and he again took up his commission as major, and fought in the ranks of the Congressionalists. How he fared in that campaign is, however, another story; as also is that of his subsequent adventures in quest of the Inca's treasure which was lost during the earthquake. Douglas is now a man of nearly fifty years of age; but he declares that he is in the very prime of life; and, if you care to visit him in his magnificent house overlooking the sea, there is nothing that will give him greater pleasure, you will find, than to talk to you about the wild days of '79-'81, when he fought against

the Peruvians. Every particular of this campaign he remembers as precisely as though it had occurred but yesterday ; and he will yarn for hours together about Prat, Condell, Lynch, Simpson, Williams, and all the rest of them ; men of English descent for the most part, who had adopted Chili as their home and country, and who helped to make the Republic what she now is, a credit to herself and to them, and a worthy protégé of that greater country across the sea from which sprang the noble and gallant gentlemen who raised Chili to the position of first of the South American Republics.